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A Woman of Martinique

A Woman of Martinique

TWO YEARS IN THE FRENCH WEST INDIES

II

CHITA AND YOUMA

BY

LAFCADIO HEARN

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
MDCCCCXXII

THE
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From a photograph taken before the hurricane of 1893. On the left is the cottage occupied by Hearn when he wrote "Chita." By the courtesy of Dr. Theodore Engelbach, Grand Isle, La.

Except as otherwise stated, the illustrations are from photographs by the Publishers' Photo Service

TWO YEARS IN THE FRENCH WEST INDIES

MARTINIQUE SKETCHES (*continued*)

TWO YEARS IN THE FRENCH WEST INDIES

MARTINIQUE SKETCHES (*continued*)

* * *

LA FILLE DE COULEUR

I

NOTHING else in the picturesque life of the French colonies of the Occident impresses the traveler on his first arrival more than the costumes of the women of color. They surprise the æsthetic sense agreeably; — they are local and special: you will see nothing resembling them among the populations of the British West Indies; they belong to Martinique, Guadeloupe, Désirade, Marie-Galante, and Cayenne — in each place differing sufficiently to make the difference interesting, especially in regard to the head-dress. That of Martinique is quite Oriental; —more attractive, although less fantastic than the Cayenne coiffure, or the pretty drooping mouchoir of Guadeloupe.

These costumes are gradually disappearing, for various reasons — the chief reason being of course the changes in the social condition of the colonies during the last forty years. Probably the question of health had also something to do with the almost

universal abandonment in Martinique of the primitive slave-dress — chemise and jupe — which exposed its wearer to serious risks of pneumonia; for as far as economical reasons are concerned, there was no fault to find with it: six francs could purchase it when money was worth more than it is now. The douillette, a long trailing dress, one piece from neck to feet, has taken its place.[1] But there was a luxurious variety of the jupe costume which is disappear-

[1] The brightly colored douillettes are classified by the people according to the designs of the printed calico: robe-à-bambou — robe-à-bouquet — robe-arc-en-ciel — robe-à-carreau — etc., according as the pattern is in stripes, flower-designs, "rainbow" bands of different tints, or plaidings. Ronde-en-ronde means a stuff printed with disk-patterns, or link-patterns of different colors — each joined with the other. A robe of one color only is called a robe-uni.

The general laws of contrasts observed in the costume require the silk foulard, or shoulder-kerchief, to make a sharp relief with the color of the robe, thus:

Robe	*Foulard*
Yellow	Blue.
Dark blue	Yellow.
Pink	Green.
Violet	Bright red.
Red	Violet.
Chocolate (cacao)	Pale blue.
Sky blue	Pale rose.

These refer, of course, to dominant or ground colors, as there are usually several tints in the foulard as well as the robe. The painted Madras should always be bright yellow. According to popular ideas of good dressing, the different tints of skin should be relieved by special choice of color in the robe, as follows:

Capresse (a clear red skin) should wear	Pale yellow.
Mulatresse (according to shade)	Rose. Blue. Green.
Négresse	White. Scarlet, or any violent color.

ing because of its cost; there is no money in the colonies now for such display: — I refer to the celebrated attire of the pet slaves and belles affranchies of the old colonial days. A full costume — including violet or crimson "petticoat" of silk or satin; chemise with half-sleeves, and much embroidery and lace; "trembling-pins" of gold (zépingue tremblant) to attach the folds of the brilliant Madras turban; the great necklace of three or four strings of gold beads bigger than peas (collier-choux); the ear-rings, immense but light as egg-shells (zanneaux-à-clous or zanneaux-chenilles); the bracelets (portes-bonheur); the studs (boutons-à-clous); the brooches, not only for the turban, but for the chemise, below the folds of the showy silken foulard or shoulder-scarf — would sometimes represent over five thousand francs expenditure. This gorgeous attire is becoming less visible every year: it is now rarely worn except on very solemn occasions — weddings, baptisms, first communions, confirmations. The da (nurse), or "porteuse-de-baptême" who bears the baby to church, holds it at the baptismal font, and afterwards carries it from house to house in order that all the friends of the family may kiss it, is thus attired; but nowadays, unless she be a professional (for there are professional das, hired only for such occasions), she usually borrows the jewelry. If tall, young, graceful, with a rich gold tone of skin, the effect of her costume is dazzling as that of a Byzantine Virgin. I saw one young da who, thus garbed,

scarcely seemed of the earth and earthly; — there was an Oriental something in her appearance difficult to describe — something that made you think of the Queen of Sheba going to visit Solomon. She had brought a merchant's baby, just christened, to receive the caresses of the family at whose house I was visiting; and when it came to my turn to kiss it, I confess I could not notice the child: I saw only the beautiful dark face, coiffed with orange and purple, bending over it, in an illumination of antique gold. . . . What a da! . . . She represented really the type of that belle affranchie of other days, against whose fascination special sumptuary laws were made: romantically she imaged for me the supernatural godmothers and Cinderellas of the Creole fairy-tales. For these become transformed in the West Indian folk-lore — adapted to the environment, and to local idealism: Cinderella, for example, is changed to a beautiful métisse, wearing a quadruple collier-choux, zépingues tremblants, and all the ornaments of a da.[1] Recalling the impression of that dazzling da, I can even now feel the picturesque justice of the

[1] . . . Vouèla Cendrillon evec yon bel ròbe velou grande lakhè. . . . Ça té ka bail ou mal zié. Li té tini bel zanneau dans zòreill li, quate-tou-chou, bouoche, bracelet, tremblant — toutt sòte bel baggaïe conm ça. . . . (Conte Cendrillon — d'après Turiault.)

There was Cendrillon with a beautiful long trailing robe of velvet on her! . . . It was enough to hurt one's eyes to look at her. She had beautiful rings in her ears, and a collier-choux of four rows, brooches, tremblants, bracelets — everything fine of that sort. (Story of Cinderella in Turiault's Creole Grammar.)

fabulist's description of Cinderella's Creole costume: Ça té ka baille ou mal ziè! (It would have given you a pain in your eyes to look at her!)

. . . Even the every-day Martinique costume is slowly changing. Year by year the "calendeuses" — the women who paint and fold the turbans — have less work to do; — the colors of the douillette are becoming less vivid; — while more and more young colored girls are being élevées en chapeau ("brought up in a hat") — i.e., dressed and educated like the daughters of the whites. These, it must be confessed, look far less attractive in the latest Paris fashion, unless white as the whites themselves: on the other hand, few white girls could look well in douillette and mouchoir — not merely because of color contrast, but because they have not that amplitude of limb and particular cambering of the torso peculiar to the half-breed race, with its large bulk and stature. Attractive as certain coolie women are, I observed that all who have adopted the Martinique costume look badly in it: they are too slender of body to wear it to advantage.

Slavery introduced these costumes, even though it probably did not invent them; and they were necessarily doomed to pass away with the peculiar social conditions to which they belonged. If the population clings still to its douillettes, mouchoirs, and foulards, the fact is largely due to the cheapness of such attire. A girl can dress very showily indeed for about twenty francs — shoes excepted; — and

thousands never wear shoes. But the fashion will no doubt have become cheaper and uglier within another decade.

At the present time, however, the stranger might be sufficiently impressed by the oddity and brilliancy of these dresses to ask about their origin — in which case it is not likely that he will obtain any satisfactory answer. After long research I found myself obliged to give up all hope of being able to outline the history of Martinique costume — partly because books and histories are scanty or defective, and partly because such an undertaking would require a knowledge possible only to a specialist. I found good reason, nevertheless, to suppose that these costumes were in the beginning adopted from certain fashions of provincial France — that the respective fashions of Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Cayenne were patterned after modes still worn in parts of the mother-country. The old-time garb of the affranchie — that still worn by the da — somewhat recalls dresses worn by the women of Southern France, more particularly about Montpellier. Perhaps a specialist might also trace back the evolution of the various Creole coiffures to old forms of head-dresses which still survive among the French country-fashions of the south and southwest provinces; — but local taste has so much modified the original style as to leave it unrecognizable to those who have never studied the subject. The Martinique fashion of folding and tying the Madras, and of calendering

it, are probably local; and I am assured that the designs of the curious semi-barbaric jewelry were all invented in the colony, where the collier-choux is still manufactured by local goldsmiths. Purchasers buy one, two, or three grains, or beads, at a time, and string them only on obtaining the requisite number. . . . This is the sum of all that I was able to learn on the matter; but in the course of searching various West Indian authors and historians for information, I found something far more important than the origin of the douillette or the collier-choux: the facts of that strange struggle between nature and interest, between love and law, between prejudice and passion, which forms the evolutional history of the mixed race.

II

CONSIDERING only the French peasant colonist and the West African slave as the original factors of that physical evolution visible in the modern fille-de-couleur, it would seem incredible; — for the intercrossing alone could not adequately explain all the physical results. To understand them fully, it will be necessary to bear in mind that both of the original races became modified in their lineage to a surprising degree by conditions of climate and environment.

The precise time of the first introduction of slaves into Martinique is not now possible to ascertain — no record exists on the subject; but it is probable that the establishment of slavery was coincident

with the settlement of the island. Most likely the first hundred colonists from Saint Christophe, who landed, in 1635, near the bay whereon the city of Saint Pierre is now situated, either brought slaves with them, or else were furnished with negroes very soon after their arrival. In the time of Père Dutertre (who visited the colonies in 1640, and printed his history of the French Antilles at Paris in 1667) slavery was already a flourishing institution — the foundation of the whole social structure. According to the Dominican missionary, the Africans then in the colony were decidedly repulsive; he describes the women as "hideous" (hideuses). There is no good reason to charge Dutertre with prejudice in his pictures of them. No writer of the century was more keenly sensitive to natural beauty than the author of that "Voyage aux Antilles" which inspired Chateaubriand, and which still, after two hundred and fifty years, delights even those perfectly familiar with the nature of the places and things spoken of. No other writer and traveler of the period possessed to a more marked degree that sense of generous pity which makes the unfortunate appear to us in an illusive, almost ideal aspect. Nevertheless, he asserts that the negresses were, as a general rule, revoltingly ugly — and, although he had seen many strange sides of human nature (having been a soldier before becoming a monk), was astonished to find that miscegenation had already begun. Doubtless the first black women thus favored, or afflicted, as the case

might be, were of the finer types of negresses; for he notes remarkable differences among the slaves procured from different coasts and various tribes. Still, these were rather differences of ugliness than aught else: they were all repulsive; — only some were more repulsive than others.[1] Granting that the first mothers of mulattoes in the colony were the superior rather than the inferior physical types — which would be a perfectly natural supposition — still we find their offspring worthy in his eyes of no higher sentiment than pity. He writes in his chapter entitled "De la naissance honteuse des mulastres":

> They have something of their Father and something of their Mother — in the same wise that Mules partake of the qualities of the creatures that engendered them: for they are neither all white, like the French; nor all black, like the Negroes, but have a livid tint, which comes of both. . . .

To-day, however, the traveler would look in vain for a *livid* tint among the descendants of those thus described: in less than two centuries and a half the physical characteristics of the race have been totally

[1] It is quite possible, however, that the slaves of Dutertre's time belonged for the most part to the uglier African tribes; and that later supplies may have been procured from other parts of the slave coast. Writing half a century later, Père Labat declares having seen freshly disembarked blacks handsome enough to inspire an artist: "J'en ai vu des deux sexes faits à peindre, et beaux par merveille" (vol. IV, chap. VII). He adds that their skin was extremely fine, and of velvety softness; "le velours n'est pas plus doux." . . . Among the thirty thousand blacks yearly shipped to the French colonies, there were doubtless many representatives of the finer African races.

changed. What most surprises is the rapidity of the transformation. After the time of Père Labat, Europeans never could "have mistaken little negro children for monkeys." Nature had begun to remodel the white, the black, and half-breed according to environment and climate: the descendant of the early colonists ceased to resemble his fathers; the Creole negro improved upon his progenitors;[1] the mulatto began to give evidence of those qualities of physical and mental power which were afterwards to render him dangerous to the integrity of the colony itself. In a temperate climate such a change would have been so gradual as to escape observation for a long period; — in the tropics it was effected with a quickness that astounds by its revelation of the natural forces at work.

Under the sun of the tropics [writes Dr. Rufz, of Martinique] the African race, as well as the European, becomes greatly modified in its reproduction. Either race gives birth to a totally new being. The Creole African came into existence as did the Creole white. And just as the offspring of Europeans who emigrated to the tropics from different parts of France displayed characteristics so identical that it was impossible to divine the original race-source — so likewise the Creole negro — whether brought into being by the heavy thick-set Congo, or the long slender black of Senegambia, or the suppler and more active Mandingo — appeared so remodeled, homogeneous, and adapted in such wise to his environment

[1] "Leur sueur n'est pas fétide comme celle des nègres de la Guinée," writes the traveler Dauxion-Lavaysse, in 1813.

that it was utterly impossible to discern in his features anything of his parentage, his original kindred, his original source.... The transformation is absolute. All that can be asserted is: "This is a white Creole; this is a black Creole"; — or, "This is a European white; this is an African black"; — and furthermore, after a certain number of years passed in the tropics, the enervated and discolored aspect of the European may create uncertainty as to his origin. But with very few exceptions the primitive African, or, as he is termed here, the "Coast Black" (le noir de la Côte), can be recognized at once....

... The Creole negro is gracefully shaped, finely proportioned: his limbs are lithe, his neck long; — his features are more delicate, his lips less thick, his nose less flattened, than those of the African; — he has the Carib's large and melancholy eye, better adapted to express the emotions.... Rarely can you discover in him the sombre fury of the African, rarely a surly and savage mien: he is brave, chatty, boastful. His skin has not the same tint as his father's — it has become more satiny; his hair remains woolly, but it is a finer wool;... all his outlines are more rounded; — one may perceive that the cellular tissue predominates, as in cultivated plants, of which the ligneous and savage fibre has become transformed....[1]

[1] Dr. E. Rufz: *Études historiques et statistiques sur la population de la Martinique.* (Saint Pierre: 1850) Vol. 1, pp. 148–50.

It has been generally imagined that the physical constitution of the black race was proof against the deadly climate of the West Indies. The truth is that the freshly imported Africans died of fever by thousands and tens-of-thousands; — the Creole-negro race, now so prolific, represents only the fittest survivors in the long and terrible struggle of the slave element to adapt itself to the new environment. Thirty thousand negroes a year were long needed to supply the French colonies. Between 1700 and 1789 no less than 900,000 slaves were imported by San Domingo alone; — yet there were less than half that number left in 1789. (See Placide Justin's *History of Santo Domingo*, p. 147.) The entire slave population of Barbados had to be renewed every sixteen years, according to estimates: the loss to planters by deaths of slaves (reckon-

This new and comelier black race naturally won from its masters a more sympathetic attention than could have been vouchsafed to its progenitors; and the consequences in Martinique and elsewhere seemed to have evoked the curious Article 9 of the Code Noir of 1665 — enacting, first, that free men who should have one or two children by slave women, as well as the slave-owners permitting the same, should be each condemned to pay two thousand pounds of sugar; secondly, that if the violator of the ordinance should be himself the owner of the mother and father of her children, the mother and the children should be confiscated for the profit of the Hospital, and deprived for their lives of the right to enfranchisement. An exception, however, was made to the effect that if the father were unmarried at the period of his concubinage, he could escape the provisions of the penalty by marrying, "according to the rites of the Church," the female slave, who would thereby be enfranchised, and her children "rendered free and legitimate." Probably the legislators did not imagine that the first portion of the article could prove inefficacious, or that any violator of the ordinance would seek to escape the penalty by those means offered in the provision. The facts, however, proved the reverse. Miscegenation continued; and Labat notices two cases of marriage between whites

ing the value of a slave at only £20 sterling) during the same period was £1,600,000 ($8,000,000). (Burck's *History of European Colonies*, vol. II, p. 141; French edition of 1767.)

Natives of Martinique

THE N[illegible]
PUBL[illegible]
A[illegible]
TILDEN FO[illegible]
R[illegible]

and blacks — describing the offspring of one union as "very handsome little mulattoes." These legitimate unions were certainly exceptional — one of them was dissolved by the ridicule cast upon the father; — but illegitimate unions would seem to have become common within a very brief time after the passage of the law. At a later day they were to become customary. The Article 9 was evidently at fault; and in March, 1724, the Black Code was reënforced by a new ordinance, of which the sixth provision prohibited marriage as well as concubinage between the races.

It appears to have had no more effect than the previous law, even in Martinique, where the state of public morals was better than in Santo Domingo. The slave race had begun to exercise an influence never anticipated by legislators. Scarcely a century had elapsed since the colonization of the island; but in that time climate and civilization had transfigured the black woman. "After one or two generations," writes the historian Rufz, "the Africaine, reformed, refined, beautified in her descendants, transformed into the Creole negress, commenced to exert a fascination irresistible, capable of winning anything (capable de tout obtenir)." [1] Travelers of the eighteenth century were confounded by the luxury of dress and of jewelry displayed by swarthy beauties in Saint Pierre. It was a public scandal to European eyes. But the Creole negress or mulattress, begin-

[1] Rufz: *Études*, vol. 1, p. 236.

ning to understand her power, sought for higher favors and privileges than silken robes and necklaces of gold beads: she sought to obtain, not merely liberty for herself, but for her parents, brothers, sisters — even friends. What successes she achieved in this regard may be imagined from the serious statement of Creole historians that if human nature had been left untrammeled to follow its better impulses, slavery would have ceased to exist a century before the actual period of emancipation! By 1738, when the white population had reached its maximum (fifteen thousand),[1] and colonial luxury had arrived at its greatest height, the question of voluntary enfranchisement was becoming very grave. So omnipotent the charm of half-breed beauty that masters were becoming the slaves of their slaves. It was not only the Creole negress who had appeared to play a part in this strange drama which was the triumph of nature over interest and judgment: her daughters, far more beautiful, had grown up to aid her, and to form a special class. These women, whose tints of skin rivaled the colors of ripe fruit, and whose gracefulness — peculiar, exotic, and irresistible — made them formidable rivals to the daughters of the dominant race, were no doubt physically superior to the modern filles-de-couleur. They were results of a natural selection which could have taken place in no community otherwise constituted; — the offspring of the union between the finer types of both races. But

[1] I am assured it has now fallen to a figure not exceeding five thousand.

that which only slavery could have rendered possible began to endanger the integrity of slavery itself: the institutions upon which the whole social structure rested were being steadily sapped by the influence of half-breed girls. Some new, severe, extreme policy was evidently necessary to avert the already visible peril. Special laws were passed by the Home-Government to check enfranchisement, to limit its reasons or motives; and the power of the slave woman was so well comprehended by the Métropole that an extraordinary enactment was made against it. It was decreed that whosoever should free a woman of color would have to pay to the Government *three times her value as a slave!*

Thus heavily weighted, emancipation advanced much more slowly than before, but it still continued to a considerable extent. The poorer Creole planter or merchant might find it impossible to obey the impulse of his conscience or of his affection, but among the richer classes pecuniary considerations could scarcely affect enfranchisement. The country had grown wealthy; and although the acquisition of wealth may not evoke generosity in particular natures, the enrichment of a whole class develops pre-existing tendencies to kindness, and opens new ways for its exercise. Later in the eighteenth century, when hospitality had been cultivated as a gentleman's duty to fantastical extremes — when liberality was the rule throughout society — when a notary summoned to draw up a deed, or a priest

invited to celebrate a marriage, might receive for fee five thousand francs in gold — there were certainly many emancipations. . . . "Even though interest and public opinion in the colonies," says an historian,[1] "were adverse to enfranchisement, the private feeling of each man combated that opinion; — Nature resumed her sway in the secret places of hearts; — and as local custom permitted a sort of polygamy, the rich man naturally felt himself bound in honor to secure the freedom of his own blood. . . . It was not a rare thing to see legitimate wives taking care of the natural children of their husbands — becoming their godmothers (s'en faire les marraines)." . . . Nature seemed to laugh all these laws to scorn, and the prejudices of race! In vain did the wisdom of legislators attempt to render the condition of the enfranchised more humble — enacting extravagant penalties for the blow by which a mulatto might avenge the insult of a white — prohibiting the freed from wearing the same dress as their former masters or mistresses wore; — "the belles affranchies found, in a costume whereof the negligence seemed a very inspiration of voluptuousness, means of evading that social inferiority which the law sought to impose upon them: — they began to inspire the most violent jealousies." [2]

[1] Rufz: *Études*, vol. II, pp. 311, 312.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 237.

III

WHAT the legislators of 1685 and 1724 endeavored to correct did not greatly improve with the abolition of slavery, nor yet with those political troubles which socially deranged colonial life. The fille-de-couleur, inheriting the charm of the belle affranchie, continued to exert a similar influence, and to fulfill an almost similar destiny. The latitude of morals persisted — though with less ostentation: it has latterly contracted under the pressure of necessity rather than through any other influences. Certain ethical principles thought essential to social integrity elsewhere have always been largely relaxed in the tropics; and — excepting, perhaps, Santo Domingo — the moral standard in Martinique was not higher than in the other French colonies. Outward decorum might be to some degree maintained; but there was no great restraint of any sort upon private lives: it was not uncommon for a rich man to have many "natural" families; and almost every individual of means had children of color. The superficial character of race prejudices was everywhere manifested by unions, which although never mentioned in polite converse, were none the less universally known; and the "irresistible fascination" of the half-breed gave the open lie to pretended hate. Nature, in the guise of the belle affranchie, had mocked at slave codes; — in the fille-de-couleur she still laughed at race pretensions, and ridiculed

the fable of physical degradation. To-day the situation has not greatly changed; and with such examples on the part of the cultivated race, what could be expected from the other? Marriages are rare; — it has been officially stated that the illegitimate births are sixty per cent; but seventy-five to eighty per cent would probably be nearer the truth. It is very common to see in the local papers such announcements as: Enfants légitimes, 1 (one birth announced); enfants naturels, 25.

In speaking of the fille-de-couleur it is necessary also to speak of the extraordinary social stratification of the community to which she belongs. The official statement of 20,000 "colored" to the total population of between 173,000 and 174,000 (in which the number of pure whites is said to have fallen as low as 5000) does not at all indicate the real proportion of mixed blood. Only a small element of unmixed African descent really exists; yet when a white Creole speaks of the gens-de-couleur he certainly means nothing darker than a mulatto skin. Race classifications have been locally made by sentiments of political origin: at least four or five shades of visible color are classed as negro. There is, however, some natural truth at the bottom of this classification: where African blood predominates, the sympathies are likely to be African; and the turning-point is reached only in the true mulatto, where, allowing the proportions of mixed blood to be nearly equal, the white would have the dominant influence

in situations more natural than existing politics. And in speaking of the filles-de-couleur, the local reference is always to women in whom the predominant element is white: a white Creole, as a general rule, deigns only thus to distinguish those who are nearly white — more usually he refers to the whole class as mulattresses. Those women whom wealth and education have placed in a social position parallel with that of the daughters of Creole whites are in some cases allowed to pass for white — or, at the very worst, are only referred to in a whisper as being de couleur. (Needless to say, these are totally beyond the range of the present considerations: there is nothing to be further said of them except that they can be classed with the most attractive and refined women of the entire tropical world.) As there is an almost infinite gradation from the true black up to the brightest sang-mêlé, it is impossible to establish any color-classification recognizable by the eye alone; and whatever lines of demarcation can be drawn between castes must be social rather than ethnical. In this sense we may accept the local Creole definition of fille-de-couleur as signifying, not so much a daughter of the race of visible color, as the half-breed girl destined from her birth to a career like that of the belle affranchie of the old régime; — for the moral cruelties of slavery have survived emancipation.

Physically, the typical fille-de-couleur may certainly be classed, as white Creole writers have not

hesitated to class her, with the "most beautiful women of the human race." [1] She has inherited not only the finer bodily characteristics of either parent race, but a something else belonging originally to neither, and created by special climatic and physical conditions — a grace, a suppleness of form, a delicacy of extremities (so that all the lines described by the bending of limbs or fingers are parts of clean curves), a satiny smoothness and fruit-tint of skin — solely West Indian. . . . Morally, of course, it is much more difficult to describe her; and whatever may safely be said refers rather to the fille-de-couleur of the past than of the present half-century. The race is now in a period of transition: public education and political changes are modifying the type, and it is impossible to guess the ultimate consequence, because it is impossible to safely predict what new influences may yet be brought to affect its social development. Before the present era of colonial decadence, the character of the fille-de-couleur was not what it is now. Even when totally uneducated, she had a peculiar charm — that charm of childishness which has power to win sympathy from the rudest natures. One could not but feel attracted toward this naïf being, docile as an infant, and as easily pleased or as easily pained — artless in her

[1] La race de sang-mêlé, issue des blancs et des noirs, est éminement civilisable. Comme types physiques, elle fournit dans beaucoup d'individus, dans ses femmes en général, les plus beaux specimens de la race humaine. *Le Préjugé de Race aux Antilles Françaises.* Par G. Souquet-Basiège (Saint Pierre, Martinique: 1883), pp. 661–62.

goodnesses as in her faults, to all outward appearance; — willing to give her youth, her beauty, her caresses to some one in exchange for the promise to love her — perhaps also to care for a mother, or a younger brother. Her astonishing capacity for being delighted with trifles, her pretty vanities and pretty follies, her sudden veerings of mood from laughter to tears — like the sudden rainbursts and sunbursts of her own passionate climate: these touched, drew, won, and tyrannized. Yet such easily created joys and pains did not really indicate any deep reserve of feeling: rather a superficial sensitiveness only — like the zhèbe-m'amisé, or zhèbe-manmzelle, whose leaves close at the touch of a hair. Such human manifestations, nevertheless, are apt to attract more in proportion as they are more visible — in proportion as the soul-current, being less profound, flows more audibly. But no hasty observation could have revealed the whole character of the fille-de-couleur to the stranger, equally charmed and surprised: the Creole comprehended her better, and probably treated her with even more real kindness. The truth was that centuries of deprivation of natural rights and hopes had given to her race — itself fathered by passion unrestrained and mothered by subjection unlimited — an inherent skepticism in the duration of love, and a marvelous capacity for accepting the destiny of abandonment as one accepts the natural and the inevitable. And that desire to please — which in the fille-de-couleur seemed to prevail above

all other motives of action (maternal affection excepted) — could have appeared absolutely natural only to those who never reflected that even sentiment had been artificially cultivated by slavery.

She asked for so little — accepted a gift with such childish pleasure — submitted so unresistingly to the will of the man who promised to love her. She bore him children — such beautiful children! — whom he rarely acknowledged, and was never asked to legitimatize; — and she did not ask perpetual affection notwithstanding — regarded the relation as a necessarily temporary one, to be sooner or later dissolved by the marriage of her children's father. If deceived in all things — if absolutely ill-treated and left destitute, she did not lose faith in human nature: she seemed a born optimist, believing most men good; — she would make a home for another and serve him better than any slave. . . . "Née de l'amour," says a Creole writer, "la fille-de-couleur vit d'amour, de rires, et d'oublis." [1] . . .

Then came the general colonial crash! . . . You cannot see its results without feeling touched by them. Everywhere the weird beauty, the immense

[1] Turiault: *Étude sur le langage Créole de la Martinique.* Brest: 1874. . . . On page 136 he cites the following pretty verses in speaking of the fille-de-couleur:

L'Amour prit soin de la former
Tendre, naïve, et caressante,
Faite pour plaire, encore plus pour aimer.
Portant tous les traits précieux
Du caractère d'une amante,
Le plaisir sur sa bouche et l'amour dans ses yeux.

melancholy of tropic ruin. Magnificent terraces, once golden with cane, now abandoned to weeds and serpents; — deserted plantation-homes, with trees rooted in the apartments and pushing up through the place of the roofs; — grass-grown alleys ravined by rains; — fruit-trees strangled by lianas; — here and there the stem of some splendid palmiste, brutally decapitated, naked as a mast; — petty frail growths of banana-trees or of bamboo slowly taking the place of century-old forest giants destroyed to make charcoal. But beauty enough remains to tell what the sensual paradise of the old days must have been, when sugar was selling at 52.

And the fille-de-couleur has also changed. She is much less humble and submissive — somewhat more exacting: she comprehends better the moral injustice of her position. The almost extreme physical refinement and delicacy, bequeathed to her by the freedwomen of the old régime, are passing away: like a conservatory plant deprived of its shelter, she is returning to a more primitive condition — hardening and growing perhaps less comely as well as less helpless. She perceives also in a vague way the peril of her race: the Creole white, her lover and protector, is emigrating; — the domination of the black becomes more and more probable. Furthermore, with the continual increase of the difficulty of living, and the growing pressure of population, social cruelties and hatreds have been developed such as her ancestors never knew. She is still loved; but it is al-

leged that she rarely loves the white, no matter how large the sacrifices made for her sake, and she no longer enjoys that reputation of fidelity accorded to her class in other years. Probably the truth is that the fille-de-couleur never had at any time capacity to bestow that quality of affection imagined or exacted as a right. Her moral side is still half savage: her feelings are still those of a child. If she does not love the white man according to his unreasonable desire, it is certain at least that she loves him as well as he deserves. Her alleged demoralization is more apparent than real; — she is changing from an artificial to a very natural being, and revealing more and more in her sufferings the true character of the luxurious social condition that brought her into existence. As a general rule, even while questioning her fidelity, the Creole freely confesses her kindness of heart, and grants her capable of extreme generosity and devotedness to strangers or to children whom she has an opportunity to care for. Indeed, her natural kindness is so strikingly in contrast with the harder and subtler character of the men of color that one might almost feel tempted to doubt if she belong to the same race. Said a Creole once, in my hearing: "The gens-de-couleur are just like the tourlouroux:[1] one must pick out the females and leave the males alone." Although perhaps capable of a double meaning, his words were not lightly ut-

[1] A sort of land-crab; — the female is selected for food, and, properly cooked, makes a delicious dish; — the male is almost worthless.

tered; — he referred to the curious but indubitable fact that the character of the colored woman appears in many respects far superior to that of the colored man. In order to understand this, one must bear in mind the difference in the colonial history of both sexes; and a citation from General Romanet,[1] who visited Martinique at the end of the last century, offers a clue to the mystery. Speaking of the tax upon enfranchisement, he writes:

> The governor appointed by the sovereign delivers the certificates of liberty — on payment by the master of a sum usually equivalent to the value of the subject. Public interest frequently justifies him in making the price of the slave proportionate to the desire or the interest manifested by the master. It can be readily understood that the tax upon the liberty of the women ought to be higher than that of the men: the latter unfortunates having no greater advantage than that of being useful; — the former know how to please: they have those rights and privileges which the whole world allows to their sex; they know how to make even the fetters of slavery serve them for adornments. They may be seen placing upon their proud tyrants the same chains worn by themselves, and making them kiss the marks left thereby: the master becomes the slave, and purchases another's liberty only to lose his own.

Long before the time of General Romanet, the colored male slave might win liberty as the guerdon of bravery in fighting against foreign invasion, or might purchase it by extraordinary economy, while

[1] *Voyage à la Martinique*, par J. R., Général de Brigade (Paris: An XII, 1804), p. 106.

working as a mechanic on extra time for his own account (he always refused to labor with negroes); but in either case his success depended upon the possession and exercise of qualities the reverse of amiable. On the other hand, the bondwoman won manumission chiefly through her power to excite affection. In the survival and perpetuation of the fittest of both sexes these widely different characteristics would obtain more and more definition with successive generations.

I find in the "Bulletin des Actes Administratifs de la Martinique" for 1831 (No. 41) a list of slaves to whom liberty was accorded pour services rendus à leurs maîtres. Out of the sixty-nine enfranchisements recorded under this head, there are only two names of male adults to be found — one an old man of sixty; — the other, called Laurencin, the betrayer of a conspiracy. The rest are young girls, or young mothers and children; — plenty of those singular and pretty names in vogue among the Creole population — Acélie, Avrillette, Mélie, Robertine, Célianne, Francillette, Adée, Catharinette, Sidollie, Céline, Coraline; — and the ages given are from sixteen to twenty-one, with few exceptions. Yet these liberties were asked for and granted at a time when Louis Philippe had abolished the tax on manumissions. . . . The same "Bulletin" contains a list of liberties granted to colored men, pour service accompli dans la milice, only!

Most of the French West Indian writers whose

works I was able to obtain and examine speak severely of the hommes-de-couleur as a class — in some instances the historian writes with a very violence of hatred. As far back as the commencement of the eighteenth century, Labat, who, with all his personal oddities, was undoubtedly a fine judge of men, declared: "The mulattoes are as a general rule well made, of good stature, vigorous, strong, adroit, industrious, and daring (hardis) beyond all conception. They have much vivacity, but are given to their pleasures, fickle, proud, deceitful (cachés), wicked, and capable of the greatest crimes." A San Domingo historian, far more prejudiced than Père Labat, speaks of them "as physically superior, though morally inferior to the whites": he wrote at a time when the race had given to the world the two best swordsmen it has yet perhaps seen — Saint-Georges and Jean-Louis.

Commenting on the judgment of Père Labat, the historian Borde observes: "The wickedness spoken of by Père Labat doubtless relates to their political passions only; for the women of color are, beyond any question, the best and sweetest persons in the world — à coup sûr, les meilleures et les plus douces personnes qu'il y ait au monde." [1] The same author, speaking of their goodness of heart, generosity to strangers and the sick, says, "they are born Sisters of Charity"; — and he is not the only historian who

[1] *Histoire de l'Ile de la Trinidad*, par M. Pierre Gustave Louis Borde, vol 1, p. 222.

has expressed such admiration of their moral qualities. What I myself saw during the epidemic of 1887–88 at Martinique convinced me that these eulogies of the women of color are not extravagant. On the other hand, the existing Creole opinion of the men of color is much less favorable than even that expressed by Père Labat. Political events and passions have, perhaps, rendered a just estimate of their qualities difficult. The history of the hommes-de-couleur in all the French colonies has been the same; — distrusted by the whites, who feared their aspirations to social equality, distrusted even more by the blacks (who still hate them secretly, although ruled by them), the mulattoes became an Ishmaelitish clan, inimical to both races, and dreaded of both. In Martinique it was attempted, with some success, to manage them by according freedom to all who would serve in the militia for a certain period with credit. At no time was it found possible to compel them to work with blacks; and they formed the whole class of skilled city workmen and mechanics for a century prior to emancipation.

. . . To-day it cannot be truly said of the fille-de-couleur that her existence is made up of "love, laughter, and forgettings." She has aims in life — the bettering of her condition, the higher education of her children, whom she hopes to free from the curse of prejudice. She still clings to the white, because through him she may hope to improve her position. Under other conditions she might even hope to effect

some sort of reconciliation between the races. But the gulf has become so much widened within the last forty years, that no rapprochement now appears possible; and it is perhaps too late even to restore the lost prosperity of the colony by any legislative or commercial reforms. The universal Creole belief is summed up in the daily repeated cry: "C'est un pays perdu!" Yearly the number of failures increase; and more whites emigrate; — and with every bankruptcy or departure some fille-de-couleur is left almost destitute, to begin life over again. Many a one has been rich and poor several times in succession; — one day her property is seized for debt; — perhaps on the morrow she finds some one able and willing to give her a home again. . . . Whatever comes, she does not die for grief, this daughter of the sun: she pours out her pain in song, like a bird. Here is one of her little improvisations — a song very popular in both Martinique and Guadeloupe, though originally composed in the latter colony.

Good-bye Madras!	Adiéu Madras!
Good-bye foulard!	Adiéu foulard!
Good-bye pretty calicoes!	Adiéu dézinde!
Good-bye collier-choux!	Adiéu collier-choux!
That ship	Batiment-là
Which is there on the buoy,	Qui sou labouè-là,
It is taking	Li ka mennein
My doudoux away.	Doudoux-à-moin allé.
Very good-day,	Bien le-bonjou',
Monsieur the Consignee.	Missié le Consignataire.
I come	Moin ka vini
To make one little petition.	Fai yon ti pétition;
My doudoux	Doudoux-à-moin

Is going away.	Y ka pati —
Alas! I pray you	T'enprie, hélas!
Delay his going.	Rétàdé li.

[He answers kindly in French: the békés are always kind to these gentle children.]

My dear child,	Ma chère enfant
It is too late.	Il est trop tard,
The bills of lading	Les connaissements
Are already signed;	Sont déjà signés,
The ship	Le batiment
Is already on the buoy.	Est déjà sur la bouée;
In an hour from now	Dans une heure d'içi,
They will be getting her [under way.	Ils vont appareiller.
When the foulards came....	Foulard rivé,
I always had some;	Moin té toujou tini;
When the Madras-kerchiefs came,	Madras rivé,
I always had some;	Moin té toujou tini;
When the printed calicoes came,	Dézindes rivé,
I always had some.	Moin té toujou tini.
... That second officer	Capitaine sougonde
Is such a kind man!	C'est yon bon gàçon!
Everybody has	Toutt moune tini
Somebody to love;	Yon moune yo aimé;
Everybody has	Toutt moune tini
Somebody to pet;	Yon moune yo chéri;
Everybody has	Toutt moune tini
A sweetheart of her own.	Yon doudoux à yo.
I am the only one	Jusse moin tou sèle
Who cannot have that — I!	Pa tini ça — moin!

... On the eve of the Fête Dieu, or Corpus Christi festival, in all these Catholic countries, the city streets are hung with banners and decorated with festoons and with palm branches; and great altars are erected at various points along the route of the procession, to serve as resting-places for the Host.

These are called "reposoirs": in Creole patois, "reposouè Bon-Dié." Each wealthy man lends something to help to make them attractive — rich plate, dainty crystal, bronzes, paintings, beautiful models of ships or steamers, curiosities from remote parts of the world. . . . The procession over, the altar is stripped, the valuables are returned to their owners: all the splendor disappears. . . . And the spectacle of that evanescent magnificence, repeated year by year, suggested to this proverb-loving people a similitude for the unstable fortune of the fille-de-couleur: Fortune milatresse c'est reposouè Bon-Dié. (The luck of the mulattress is the resting-place of the Good-God.)

BÊTE-NI-PIÉ

I

SAINT PIERRE is in one respect fortunate beyond many tropical cities; — she has scarcely any mosquitoes, although there are plenty of mosquitoes in other parts of Martinique, even in the higher mountain villages. The flood of bright water that pours perpetually through all her streets, renders her comparatively free from the pest; — nobody sleeps under a mosquito bar.

Nevertheless, Saint Pierre is not exempt from other peculiar plagues of tropical life; and you cannot be too careful about examining your bed before venturing to lie down, and your clothing before you dress; — for various disagreeable things might be hiding in them: a spider large as a big crab, or a scorpion or a mabouya or a centipede — or certain large ants whose bite burns like the pricking of a red-hot needle. No one who has lived in Saint Pierre is likely to forget the ants. . . . There are three or four kinds in every house; — the fourmi fou (mad ant), a little speckled yellowish creature whose movements are so rapid as to delude the vision; the great black ant which allows itself to be killed before it lets go what it has bitten; the venomous little red ant, which is almost too small to see; and the small black ant which does not bite at all — are usually

omnipresent, and appear to dwell together in harmony. They are pests in kitchens, cupboards, and safes; but they are scavengers. It is marvelous to see them carrying away the body of a great dead roach or centipede — pulling and pushing together like trained laborers, and guiding the corpse over obstacles or around them with extraordinary skill. . . . There was a time when ants almost destroyed the colony — in 1751. The plantations devastated by them are described by historians as having looked as if desolated by fire. Underneath the ground in certain places, layers of their eggs two inches deep were found extending over acres. Infants left unwatched in the cradle for a few hours were devoured alive by them. Immense balls of living ants were washed ashore at the same time on various parts of the coast (a phenomenon repeated within the memory of Creoles now living in the northeast parishes). The Government vainly offered rewards for the best means of destroying the insects; but the plague gradually disappeared as it came.

None of these creatures can be prevented from entering a dwelling; — you may as well resign yourself to the certainty of meeting with them from time to time. The great spiders (with the exception of those which are hairy) need excite no alarm or disgust; — indeed, they are suffered to live unmolested in many houses, partly owing to a belief that they bring good-luck, and partly because they destroy multitudes of those enormous and noisome roaches

which spoil whatever they cannot eat. The scorpion is less common; but it has a detestable habit of lurking under beds; and its bite communicates a burning fever. With far less reason, the mabouya is almost equally feared. It is a little lizard about six inches long, and ashen-colored; — it haunts only the interior of houses, while the bright-green lizards dwell only upon the roofs. Like other reptiles of the same order, the mabouya can run over or cling to polished surfaces; and there is a popular belief that if frightened, it will leap at one's face or hands and there fasten itself so tightly that it cannot be dislodged except by cutting it to pieces. Moreover, its feet are supposed to have the power of leaving certain livid and ineffaceable marks upon the skin of the person to whom it attaches itself: — ça ka ba ou lota, say the colored people. Nevertheless, there is no creature more timid and harmless than the mabouya.

But the most dreaded and the most insolent invader of domestic peace is the centipede. The water system of the city banished the mosquito; but it introduced the centipede into almost every dwelling. Saint Pierre has a plague of centipedes. All the covered drains, the gutters, the crevices of fountain-basins and bathing-basins, the spaces between floor and ground, shelter centipedes. And the bête-à-mille-pattes is the terror of the barefooted population: — scarcely a day passes that some child or bonne or workman is not bitten by the creature.

The sight of a full-grown centipede is enough to

affect a strong set of nerves. Ten to eleven inches is the average length of adults; but extraordinary individuals much exceeding this dimension may be sometimes observed in the neighborhood of distilleries (rhommeries) and sugar-refineries. According to age, the color of the creature varies from yellowish to black; — the younger ones often have several different tints; the old ones are uniformly jet-black, and have a carapace of surprising toughness — difficult to break. If you tread, by accident or design, upon the tail, the poisonous head will instantly curl back and bite the foot through any ordinary thickness of upper-leather.

As a general rule the centipede lurks about the courtyards, foundations, and drains by preference; but in the season of heavy rains he does not hesitate to move upstairs, and make himself at home in parlors and bedrooms. He has a provoking habit of nestling in your moresques or your chinoises — those wide light garments you put on before taking your siesta or retiring for the night. He also likes to get into your umbrella — an article indispensable in the tropics; and you had better never open it carelessly. He may even take a notion to curl himself up in your hat, suspended on the wall (I have known a Trigonocephalus to do the same thing in a country-house). He has also a singular custom of mounting upon the long trailing dresses (douillettes) worn by Martinique women — and climbing up very swiftly and lightly to the wearer's neck, where

the prickling of his feet first betrays his presence. Sometimes he will get into bed with you and bite you, because you have not resolution enough to lie perfectly still while he is tickling you. . . . It is well to remember before dressing that merely shaking a garment may not dislodge him; — you must examine every part very patiently — particularly the sleeves of a coat and the legs of pantaloons.

The vitality of the creature is amazing. I kept one in a bottle without food or water for thirteen weeks, at the end of which time it remained active and dangerous as ever. Then I fed it with living insects, which it devoured ravenously; — beetles, roaches, earthworms, several lepismæ, even one of the dangerous-looking millepedes, which have a great resemblance in outward structure to the centipede, but a thinner body, and more numerous limbs — all seemed equally palatable to the prisoner. . . . I knew an instance of one, nearly a foot long, remaining in a silk parasol for more than four months, and emerging unexpectedly one day, with aggressiveness undiminished, to bite the hand that had involuntarily given it deliverance.

In the city the centipede has but one natural enemy able to cope with him — the hen! The hen attacks him with delight, and often swallows him, head first, without taking the trouble to kill him. The cat hunts him, but she is careful never to put her head near him; — she has a trick of whirling him round and round upon the floor so quickly as to stupefy him:

then, when she sees a good chance, she strikes him dead with her claws. But if you are fond of your cat you will let her run no risks, as the bite of a large centipede might have very bad results for your pet. Its quickness of movement demands all the quickness of even the cat for self-defense. . . . I know of men who have proved themselves able to seize a fer-de-lance by the tail, whirl it round and round, and then flip it as you would crack a whip — whereupon the terrible head flies off; but I never heard of any one in Martinique daring to handle a living centipede.

There are superstitions concerning the creature which have a good effect in diminishing his tribe. If you kill a centipede, you are sure to receive money soon; and even if you dream of killing one it is good-luck. Consequently, people are glad of any chance to kill centipedes — usually taking a heavy stone or some iron utensil for the work; — a wooden stick is not a good weapon. There is always a little excitement when a bête-ni-pié (as the centipede is termed in the patois) exposes itself to death; and you may often hear those who kill it uttering a sort of litany of abuse with every blow, as if addressing a human enemy: "Quitté moin tchoué ou, maudi! — quitté moin tchoué ou, scelerat! — quitté moin tchoué ou, Satan! — quitté moin tchoué ou, abonocio!" etc. (Let me kill you, accursed! scoundrel! Satan! abomination!)

The patois term for the centipede is not a mere corruption of the French bête-à-mille-pattes. Among a

population of slaves, unable to read or write,[1] there were only the vaguest conceptions of numerical values; and the French term bête-à-mille-pattes was not one which could appeal to negro imagination. The slaves themselves invented an equally vivid name, bête-anni-pié (the Beast-which-is-all-feet); anni in Creole signifying "only," and in such a sense "all." Abbreviated by subsequent usage to bête-'ni-pié, the appellation has amphibology; — for there are two words "ni" in the patois, one signifying "to have," and the other "naked." So that the Creole for a centipede might be translated in three ways — "the Beast-which-is-all-feet"; or, "the Naked-footed Beast"; or with fine irony of affirmation, "the Beast-which-has-feet."

II

WHAT is the secret of that horror inspired by the centipede? . . . It is but very faintly related to our knowledge that the creature is venomous; — the results of the bite are only temporary swelling and a brief fever; — it is less to be feared than the bite of other tropical insects and reptiles which never inspire the same loathing by their aspect. And the shapes of venomous creatures are not always shapes of ugliness. The serpent has elegance of form as well as attractions of metallic tinting; — the tarantula, or the matou-

[1] According to the Martinique *Annuaire* for 1887, there were even then, out of a total population of 173,182, no less than 125,366 unable to read and write.

tou-falaise, has geometrical beauty. Lapidaries have in all ages expended rare skill upon imitations of serpent grace in gold and gems; — a princess would not scorn to wear a diamond spider. But what art could utilize successfully the form of the centipede? It is a form of absolute repulsiveness — a skeleton-shape half defined: — the suggestion of some old reptile-spine astir, crawling with its fragments of ribs.

No other living thing excites exactly the same feeling produced by the sight of the centipede — the intense loathing and peculiar fear. The instant you see a centipede you feel it is absolutely necessary to kill it; you cannot find peace in your house while you know that such a life exists in it: perhaps the intrusion of a serpent would annoy and disgust you less. And it is not easy to explain the whole reason of this loathing. The form alone has, of course, something to do with it — a form that seems almost a departure from natural laws. But the form alone does not produce the full effect, which is only experienced when you see the creature in motion. The true horror of the centipede, perhaps, must be due to the monstrosity of its movement — multiple and complex, as of a chain of pursuing and interdevouring lives: there is something about it that makes you recoil, as from a sudden corrupt swarming-out. It is confusing — a series of contractings and lengthenings and undulations so rapid as to allow of being only half seen: it alarms also, because the thing seems perpetually about to

disappear, and because you know that to lose sight of it for one moment involves the very unpleasant chance of finding it upon you the next — perhaps between skin and clothing.

But this is not all: — the sensation produced by the centipede is still more complex — complex, in fact, as the visible organization of the creature. For, during pursuit — whether retreating or attacking, in hiding or fleeing — it displays a something which seems more than instinct: calculation and cunning — a sort of malevolent intelligence. It knows how to delude, how to terrify; — it has marvelous skill in feinting; — it is an abominable juggler. . . .

III

I AM about to leave my room after breakfast, when little Victoire who carries the meals up-stairs in a wooden tray, screams out: "Gadé, Missié! ni bête-ni-pié assous dos ou!" (There is a thousand-footed beast upon my back!)

Off goes my coat, which I throw upon the floor; — the little servant, who has a nervous horror of centipedes, climbs upon a chair. I cannot see anything upon the coat, nevertheless; — I lift it by the collar, turn it about very cautiously — nothing! Suddenly the child screams again; and I perceive the head close to my hand; — the execrable thing had been hiding in a perpendicular fold of the coat, which I drop only just in time to escape getting bitten. Immediately the centipede becomes invisible. Then I take the coat

by one flap, and turn it over very quickly: just as quickly does the centipede pass over it in the inverse direction, and disappear under it again. I have had my first good look at him: he seems nearly a foot long — has a greenish-yellow hue against the black cloth — and pink legs, and a violet head; — he is evidently young. . . . I turn the coat a second time: same disgusting manœuvre. Undulations of livid color flow over him as he lengthens and shortens; — while running his shape is but half apparent; it is only as he makes a half pause in doubling round and under the coat that the panic of his legs becomes discernible. When he is fully exposed they move with invisible rapidity — like a vibration; — you can see only a sort of pink haze extending about him — something to which you would no more dare advance your finger than to the vapory halo edging a circular saw in motion. Twice more I turn and re-turn the coat with the same result; — I observe that the centipede always runs toward my hand, until I withdraw it: he feints!—

With a stick I uplift one portion of the coat after another; and suddenly perceive him curved under a sleeve — looking quite small! — how could he have seemed so large a moment ago? . . . But before I can strike him he has flickered over the cloth again, and vanished; and I discover that he has the power of *magnifying himself* — dilating the disgust of his shape at will: he invariably amplifies himself to face attack. . . .

It seems very difficult to dislodge him; he displays astonishing activity and cunning at finding wrinkles and folds to hide in. Even at the risk of damaging various things in the pockets, I stamp upon the coat; — then lift it up with the expectation of finding the creature dead. But it suddenly rushes out from some part or other, looking larger and more wicked than ever — drops to the floor, and charges at my feet: a sortie! I strike at him unsuccessfully with the stick: he retreats to the angle between wainscoting and floor, and runs along it fast as a railroad train — dodges two or three pokes — gains the door-frame — glides behind a hinge, and commences to run over the wall of the stairway. There the hand of a black servant slaps him dead.

"Always strike at the head," the servant tells me; "never tread on the tail. . . . This is a small one: the big fellows can make you afraid if you do not know how to kill them."

. . . I pick up the carcass with a pair of scissors. It does not look formidable now that it is all contracted; — it is scarcely eight inches long — thin as cardboard, and even less heavy. It has no substantiality, no weight; — it is a mere appearance, a mask, a delusion. . . . But remembering the spectral, cunning, juggling something which magnified and moved it but a moment ago — I feel almost tempted to believe, with certain savages, that there are animal shapes inhabited by goblins. . . .

IV

"Is there anything still living and lurking in old black drains of Thought — any bigotry, any prejudice, anything in the moral world whereunto the centipede may be likened?"

"Really, I do not know," replied the friend to whom I had put the question; "but you need only go as far as the vegetable world for a likeness. Did you ever see anything like this?" he added, opening a drawer and taking therefrom something revolting, which, as he pressed it in his hand, looked like a long thick bundle of dried centipedes.

"Touch them," he said, holding out to me the mass of articulated flat bodies and bristling legs.

"Not for anything!" I replied, in astonished disgust. He laughed, and opened his hand. As he did so, the mass expanded. . . .

"Now look!" he exclaimed.

Then I saw that all the bodies were united at the tails — grew together upon one thick flat annulated stalk . . . a plant!

"But here is the fruit," he continued, taking from the same drawer a beautifully embossed ovoid nut, large as a duck's egg, ruddy-colored, and so exquisitely varnished by nature as to resemble a rosewood carving fresh from the hands of the cabinet-maker. In its proper place among the leaves and branches, it had the appearance of something delicious being devoured by a multitude of centipedes. Inside was

a kernel, hard and heavy as iron-wood; but this in time, I was told, falls into dust: though the beautiful shell remains always perfect.

Negroes call it the coco-macaque.

MA BONNE

I

I CANNOT teach Cyrillia the clock; — I have tried until both of us had our patience strained to the breaking-point. Cyrillia still believes she will learn how to tell the time some day or other; — I am certain that she never will. "Missié," she says, "lézhè pa aïen pou moin: c'est minitt ka fouté moin yon travail!" — the hours do not give her any trouble; but the minutes are a frightful bore! And nevertheless, Cyrillia is punctual as the sun; — she always brings my coffee and a slice of corossole at five in the morning precisely. Her clock is the cabritt-bois. The great cricket stops singing, she says, at half-past four: the cessation of its chant awakens her. . . .

"Bonjou', Missié. Coument ou passé lanuitt?" — "Thanks, my daughter, I slept well." — "The weather is beautiful: if Missié would like to go to the beach, his bathing-towels are ready." — "Good! Cyrillia; I will go." . . . Such is our regular morning conversation.

Nobody breakfasts before eleven o'clock or thereabouts; but after an early sea-bath, one is apt to feel a little hollow during the morning, unless one take some sort of refreshment. Cyrillia always prepares something for me on my return from the beach — either a little pot of fresh cocoa-water, or a cocoyage, or a mabiyage, or a bavaroise.

The cocoyage I like the best of all. Cyrillia takes a green cocoanut, slices off one side of it so as to open a hole, then pours the opalescent water into a bowl, adds to it a fresh egg, a little Holland gin, and some grated nutmeg and plenty of sugar. Then she whips up the mixture into effervescence with her baton-lélé. The baton-lélé is an indispensable article in every Creole home: it is a thin stick which is cut from a young tree so as to leave at one end a whorl of branch-stumps sticking out at right angles like spokes; — by twirling the stem between the hands, the stumps whip up the drink in a moment.

The mabiyage is less agreeable, but is a popular morning drink among the poorer classes. It is made with a little white rum and a bottle of the bitter native root-beer called mabi. The taste of mabi I can only describe as that of molasses and water flavored with a little cinchona bark.

The bavaroise is fresh milk, sugar, and a little Holland gin or rum — mixed with the baton-lélé until a fine thick foam is formed. After the cocoyage, I think it is the best drink one can take in the morning; but very little spirit must be used for any of these mixtures. It is not until just before the midday meal that one can venture to take a serious stimulant — yon ti ponch — rum and water, sweetened with plenty of sugar or sugar syrup.

The word "sucre" is rarely used in Martinique — considering that sugar is still the chief product; — the word "doux" (sweet) is commonly substituted

for it. Doux has, however, a larger range of meaning: it may signify syrup, or any sort of sweets — duplicated into doudoux, it means the corossole fruit as well as a sweetheart. "Ça qui lè doudoux?" is the cry of the corossole-seller. If a negro asks at a grocery store (graisserie) for sique instead of for doux, it is only because he does not want it to be supposed that he means syrup; — as a general rule, he will only use the word sique when referring to quality of sugar wanted, or to sugar in hogsheads. Doux enters into domestic consumption in quite remarkable ways. People put sugar into fresh milk, English porter, beer, and cheap wine; — they cook various vegetables with sugar, such as peas; they seem to be particularly fond of sugar-and-water and of d'leau-pain — bread-and-water boiled, strained, mixed with sugar, and flavored with cinnamon. The stranger gets accustomed to all this sweetness without evil results. In a northern climate the consequence would probably be at least a bilious attack; but in the tropics, where salt fish and fruits are popularly preferred to meat, the prodigal use of sugar or sugar-syrups appears to be decidedly beneficial.

. . . After Cyrillia has prepared my cocoyage, and rinsed the bathing-towels in fresh-water, she is ready to go to market, and wants to know what I would like to eat for breakfast. "Anything Creole, Cyrillia; — I want to know what people eat in this country." She always does her best to please me in this respect — almost daily introduces me to some unfa-

miliar dishes, something odd in the way of fruit or fish.

II

CYRILLIA has given me a good idea of the range and character of mangé-créole; and I can venture to write something about it after a year's observation. By mangé-créole I refer only to the food of the people proper, the colored population; for the cuisine of the small class of wealthy whites is chiefly European, and devoid of local interest: — I might observe, however, that the fashion of cooking is rather Provençal than Parisian; — rather of southern than of northern France.

Meat, whether fresh or salt, enters little into the nourishment of the poorer classes. This is partly, no doubt, because of the cost of all meats; but it is also due to natural preference for fruits and fish. When fresh meat is purchased, it is usually to make a stew or daube; — probably salt meats are more popular; and native vegetables and manioc flour are preferred to bread. There are only two popular soups which are peculiar to the Creole cuisine — calalou, a gombo soup, almost precisely similar to that of Louisiana; and the soupe-d'habitant, or "country soup." It is made of yams, carrots, bananas, turnips, choux-caraïbes, pumpkins, salt pork, and pimento, all boiled together; — the salt meat being left out of the composition on Fridays.

The great staple, the true meat of the population,

is salt codfish, which is prepared in a great number of ways. The most popular and the rudest preparation of it is called "ferocious" (féroce); and it is not at all unpalatable. The codfish is simply fried, and served with vinegar, oil, pimento; — manioc flour and avocados being considered indispensable adjuncts. As manioc flour forms a part of almost every Creole meal, a word of information regarding it will not be out of place here.

Everybody who has heard the name probably knows that the manioc root is naturally poisonous, and that the toxic elements must be removed by pressure and desiccation before the flour can be made. Good manioc flour has an appearance like very coarse oatmeal; and is probably quite as nourishing. Even when dear as bread, it is preferred, and forms the flour of the population, by whom the word "farine" is only used to signify manioc flour: if wheat-flour be referred to it is always qualified as "French flour" (farine-fouance). Although certain flours are regularly advertised as American in the local papers, they are still farine-fouance for the population, who call everything foreign French. American beer is biè-fouance; American canned peas, ti-pois-fouance; any white foreigner who can talk French is yon béké-fouance.

Usually the manioc flour is eaten uncooked: [1]

[1] There is record of an attempt to manufacture bread with one part manioc flour to three of wheat-flour. The result was excellent; but no serious effort was ever made to put the manioc bread on the market.

merely poured into a plate, with a little water and stirred with a spoon into a thick paste or mush — the thicker the better; — "dleau passé farine" (more water than manioc flour) is a saying which describes the condition of a very destitute person. When not served with fish, the flour is occasionally mixed with water and refined molasses (sirop-battrie): this preparation, which is very nice, is called cousscaye. There is also a way of boiling it with molasses and milk into a kind of pudding. This is called matêté; children are very fond of it. Both of these names, cousscaye and matêté, are alleged to be of Carib origin: the art of preparing the flour itself from manioc root is certainly an inheritance from the Caribs, who bequeathed many singular words to the Creole patois of the French West Indies.

Of all the preparations of codfish with which manioc flour is eaten, I preferred the lamori-bouilli — the fish boiled plain, after having been steeped long enough to remove the excess of salt; and then served with plenty of olive-oil and pimento. The people who have no home of their own, or at least no place to cook, can buy their food already prepared from the màchannes lapacotte, who seem to make a specialty of macadam (codfish stewed with rice) and the other two dishes already referred to. But in every colored family there are occasional feasts of lamori-au-laitt, codfish stewed with milk and potatoes; lamori-au-grattin, codfish boned, pounded with toast crumbs, and boiled with butter, onions,

and pepper into a mush; — coubouyon-lamori, codfish stewed with butter and oil; — bachamelle, codfish boned and stewed with potatoes, pimentos, oil, garlic, and butter.

Pimento is an essential accompaniment to all these dishes, whether it be cooked or raw: everything is served with plenty of pimento — en pile, en pile piment. Among the various kinds I can mention only the piment-café, or "coffee-pepper," larger but about the same shape as a grain of Liberian coffee, violet-red at one end; the piment-zouèseau, or bird-pepper, small and long and scarlet; — and the piment-capresse, very large, pointed at one end, and bag-shaped at the other. It takes a very deep red color when ripe, and is so strong that if you only break the pod in a room, the sharp perfume instantly fills the apartment. Unless you are as well trained as any Mexican to eat pimento, you will probably reregret your first encounter with the capresse.

Cyrillia told me a story about this infernal vegetable.

III

ZHISTOUÈ PIMENT

Té ni yon manman qui té ni en pile, en pile yche; et yon jou y pa té ni aïen pou y té baill yche-là mangé. Y té ka lévé bon matin-là sans yon sou: y pa sa ça y té douè fai — là y té ké baill latête. Y allé lacaïe macoumè-y, raconté

PIMENTO STORY

There was once a mamma who had ever so many children; and one day she had nothing to give those children to eat. She had got up very early that morning, without a sou in the world: she did not know what to do: she was so worried that her head was upset. She went to the house of

lapeine-y. Macoumè baill y toua chopine farine-manioc. Y allé lacaill lautt macoumè, qui baill y yon grand trai piment. Macoumè-là di y venne trai-piment-à, épi y té pè acheté lamori — pisse y ja té ni farine. Madame-là di: "Mèçi, macoumè"; — y di y bonjou': épi y allé lacaïe-y.

a woman-friend, and told her about her trouble. The friend gave her three chopines [three pints] of manioc flour. Then she went to the house of another female friend, who gave her a big trayful of pimentos. The friend told her to sell that tray of pimentos: then she could buy some codfish — since she already had some manioc flour. The goodwife said: "Thank you, macoumè" — she bid her good-day, and then went to her own house.

Lhè y rivé àcaïe y limé difè: y metté canari épi dleau assous difé-à; épi y cassé toutt piment-là et metté yo adans canari-à assous difé.

The moment she got home, she made a fire, and put her canari [earthern pot] full of water on the fire to boil: then she broke up all the pimentos and put them into the canari on the fire.

Lhè y ouè canari-à ka bouï, y pouend baton-lélé, épi y lélé piment-à: aloss y ka fai yonne calalou-piment. Lhè calalou-piment-là té tchouitt, y pouend chaque zassiett yche-li; y metté calalou yo fouète dans zassiett-là; y metté ta-mari fouète, assou, épi ta-y. Épi lhè calalou-là té bien fouète, y metté farine nans chaque zassiett-là. Épi y crié toutt moune vini mangé. Toutt moune vini metté yo á-tabe.

As soon as she saw the canari boiling, she took her baton-lélé, and beat up all those pimentos: then she made a pimento-calalou. When the pimento-calalou was well cooked, she took each one of the children's plates, and poured their calalou into the plates to cool it; she also put her husband's out to cool, and her own. And when the calalou was quite cool, she put some manioc flour into each of the plates. Then she called to everybody to come and eat. They all came, and sat down to table.

Pouèmiè bouchée mari-à pouend, y rété — y crié: "Aïe! ouaill! mafenm!" Fenm-là réponne mari y: "Ouaill! monmari!" Cés ti manmaille-là crié: "Ouaill! manman!" Manman-à réponne: "Ouaill! yches-moin!" . . . Yo toutt

The first mouthful that husband took he stopped and screamed: "Aïe! ouaill! my wife!" The woman answered her husband: "Ouaill! my husband!" The little children all screamed: "Ouaill! mamma!" Their mamma answered: "Ouaill! my children!"

pouend couri, quitté caïe-là sèle — épi yo toutt tombé larivìè à touempé bouche yo. Cés ti manmaille-là bouè dleau sitellement jusse temps yo toutt néyé: té ka rété anni manman-là épi papa-là. Yo té là, bò larivìè, qui té ka pleiré. Moin té ka passé à lhè-à; — moin ka mandé yo: "Ça zautt ni?"

Nhomme-là lévé: y baill moin yon sèle coup d'piè, y voyé moin lautt bò larivìè — ou ouè moin vini pou conté ça ba ou.

. . . They all ran out, left the house empty; and they tumbled into the river to steep their mouths. Those little children just drank water and drank water till they were all drowned: there was nobody left except the mamma and the papa. They stayed there on the river-bank, and cried. I was passing that way just at that time; — I asked them: "What ails you people?"

That man got up and gave me just one kick that sent me right across the river; I came here at once, as you see, to tell you all about it. . . .

IV

. . . It is no use for me to attempt anything like a detailed description of the fish Cyrillia brings me day after day from the Place du Fort: the variety seems to be infinite. I have learned, however, one curious fact which is worth noting: that, as a general rule, the more beautifully colored fish are the least palatable, and are sought after only by the poor. The perroquet, black, with bright bands of red and yellow; the cirurgien, blue and black; the patate, yellow and black; the moringue, which looks like polished granite; the souri, pink and yellow; the vermilion Gouôs-zie; the rosy sade; the red Bon-Dié-manié-moin ("the-Good-God-handled-me") — it has two queer marks as of great fingers; and the various kinds of all-blue fish, balaou, conliou, etc., varying from steel-color to violet — these are seldom

seen at the tables of the rich. There are exceptions, of course, to this and all general rules: notably the couronné, pink spotted beautifully with black — a sort of Redfish, which never sells less than fourteen cents a pound; and the zorphi, which has exquisite changing lights of nacreous green and purple. It is said, however, that the zorphi is sometimes poisonous, like the bécunne; and there are many fish which, although not venomous by nature, have always been considered dangerous. In the time of Père Dutertre it was believed these fish ate the apples of the manchineel-tree, washed into the sea by rains; — to-day it is popularly supposed that they are rendered occasionally poisonous by eating the barnacles attached to copper-plating of ships. The tazard, the lune, the capitaine, the dorade, the perroquet, the couliou, the congre, various crabs, and even the tonne — all are dangerous unless perfectly fresh: the least decomposition seems to develop a mysterious poison. A singular phenomenon regarding the poisoning occasionally produced by the bécunne and dorade is that the skin peels from the hands and feet of those lucky enough to survive the terrible colics, burnings, itchings, and delirium, which are early symptoms. Happily these accidents are very rare, since the markets have been properly inspected: in the time of Dr. Rufz, they would seem to have been very common — so common that he tells us he would not eat fresh fish without being perfectly certain where it was caught and how long it had been out of the water.

The poor buy the brightly colored fish only when the finer qualities are not obtainable at low rates; but often and often the catch is so enormous that half of it has to be thrown back into the sea. In the hot moist air, fish decomposes very rapidly; it is impossible to transport it to any distance into the interior; and only the inhabitants of the coast can indulge in fresh fish — at least sea-fish.

Naturally, among the laboring class the question of quality is less important than that of quantity and substance, unless the fish-market be extraordinarily well stocked. Of all fresh fish, the most popular is the tonne, a great blue-gray creature whose flesh is solid as beef; next come in order of preferment the flying-fish (volants), which often sell as low as four for a cent; — then the lambi, or sea-snail, which has a very dense and nutritious flesh; — then the small whitish fish classed as sàdines; — then the blue-colored fishes according to price, couliou, balaou, etc.; — lastly, the shark, which sells commonly at two cents a pound. Large sharks are not edible; the flesh is too hard; but a young shark is very good eating indeed. Cyrillia cooked me a slice one morning: it was quite delicate, tasted almost like veal.

The quantity of very small fish sold is surprising. With ten sous the family of a laborer can have a good fish-dinner: a pound of sàdines is never dearer than two sous; — a pint of manioc flour can be had for the same price; and a big avocado sells for a sou.

This is more than enough food for any one person; and by doubling the expense one obtains a proportionately greater quantity — enough for four or five individuals. The sàdines are roasted over a charcoal fire, and flavored with a sauce of lemon, pimento, and garlic. When there are no sàdines, there are sure to be coulious in plenty — small coulious about as long as your little finger: these are more delicate, and fetch double the price. With four sous' worth of coulious a family can have a superb blaffe. To make a blaffe the fish are cooked in water, and served with pimento, lemon, spices, onions, and garlic; but without oil or butter. Experience has demonstrated that coulious make the best blaffe; and a blaffe is seldom prepared with other fish.

V

THERE are four dishes which are the holiday luxuries of the poor: manicou, ver-palmiste, zandouille, and poule-épi-diri.[1]

The manicou is a brave little marsupial, which might be called the opossum of Martinique: it fights,

[1] I must mention a surreptitious dish, chatt; — needless to say the cats are not sold, but stolen. It is true that only a small class of poor people eat cats; but they eat so many cats that cats have become quite rare in Saint Pierre. The custom is purely superstitious: it is alleged that if you eat cat seven times, or if you eat seven cats, no witch, wizard, or quimboiseur can ever do you any harm; and the cat ought to be eaten on Christmas Eve in order that the meal be perfectly efficacious. . . . The mystic number "seven" enters into another and a better Creole superstition; — if you kill a serpent, seven great sins are forgiven to you: ou ké ni sept grands péchés effacé.

although overmatched, with the serpent, and is a great enemy to the field-rat. In the market a manicou sells for two francs and a half at cheapest: it is generally salted before being cooked.

The great worm, or caterpillar, called ver-palmiste is found in the heads of cabbage-palms — especially after the cabbage has been cut out, and the tree has begun to perish. It is the grub of a curious beetle, which has a proboscis of such form as suggested the Creole appellation, léfant: the "elephant." These worms are sold in the Place du Fort at two sous each: they are spitted and roasted alive, and are said to taste like almonds. I have never tried to find out whether this be fact or fancy; and I am glad to say that few white Creoles confess a liking for this barbarous food.

The zandouilles are delicious sausages made with pig-buff — and only seen in the market on Sundays. They cost a franc and a half each; and there are several women who have an established reputation throughout Martinique for their skill in making them. I have tasted some not less palatable than the famous London "pork-pies." Those of Lamentin are reputed the best in the island.

But poule-épi-diri is certainly the most popular dish of all: it is the dearest, as well, and poor people can rarely afford it. In Louisiana an almost similar dish is called jimbalaya: chicken cooked with rice. The Martiniquais think it such a delicacy that an over-exacting person, or one difficult to satisfy, is re-

proved with the simple question: "Ça ou lè 'ncò — poule-épi-diri?" (What more do you want, great heavens! — chicken-and-rice?) Naughty children are bribed into absolute goodness by the promise of poule-épi-diri:

> Aïe! chè, bò doudoux!
> Doudoux ba ou poule-épi-diri;
> Aïe! chè, bò doudoux! . . .

Aïe, dear! kiss doudoux! — doudoux has rice-and-chicken for you! — aïe, dear! kiss doudoux!

How far rice enters into the success of the dish above mentioned I cannot say; but rice ranks in favor generally above all cereals; it is at least six times more in demand than maize. Diri-doux, rice boiled with sugar, is sold in prodigious quantities daily — especially at the markets, where little heaps of it, rolled in pieces of banana or cachibou leaves, are retailed at a cent each. Diri-aulaitt, a veritable rice-pudding, is also very popular; but it would weary the reader to mention one tenth of the Creole preparations into which rice enters.

VI

EVERYBODY eats akras; — they sell at a cent apiece. The akra is a small fritter or pancake, which may be made of fifty different things — among others cod-fish, titiri, beans, brains, choux-caraïbes, little black peas (poix-zié-nouè, "black-eyed peas"), or of craw-fish (akra-cribiche). When made of carrots, bananas,

chicken, palm-cabbage, etc., and sweetened, they are called marinades. On first acquaintance they seem rather greasy for so hot a climate; but one learns, on becoming accustomed to tropical conditions, that a certain amount of oily or greasy food is both healthy and needful.

First among popular vegetables are beans. Red beans are preferred; but boiled white beans, served cold with vinegar and plenty of oil, form a favorite salad. Next in order of preferment come the choux-caraïbes, patates, zignames, camanioc, and cous-scouche: all immense roots — the true potatoes of the tropics. The camanioc is finer than the choux-caraïbe, boils whiter and softer: in appearance it resembles the manioc root very closely, but has no toxic element. The cousscouche is the best of all: the finest Irish potato boiled into sparkling flour is not so good. Most of these roots can be cooked into a sort of mush, called migan: such as migan-choux, made with the choux-caraïbe; migan-zignames, made with yams; migan-cousscouche, etc. — in which case crabs or shrimps are usually served with the migan There is a particular fondness for the little rosy crab called tourlouroux, in patois touloulou. Migan is also made with bread-fruit. Very large bananas or plantains are boiled with codfish, with daubes, or meat stews, and with eggs. The bread-fruit is a fair substitute for vegetables. It must be cooked very thoroughly, and has a dry potato taste. What is called the fleu-fouitt-à-pain, or "bread-fruit flower" — a long pod-

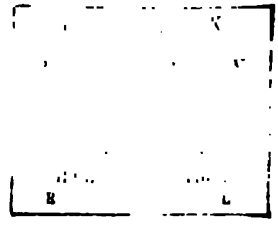
shaped solid growth, covered exteriorly with tiny seeds closely set as pin-heads could be, and having an interior pith very elastic and resistant — is candied into a delicious sweetmeat.

VII

THE consumption of bananas is enormous: more bananas are eaten than vegetables; and more banana-trees are yearly being cultivated. The negro seems to recognize instinctively that economical value of the banana to which attention was long since called by Humboldt, who estimated that while an acre planted in wheat would barely support three persons, an acre planted in banana-trees would nourish fifty.

Bananas and plantains hold the first place among fruits in popular esteem; — they are cooked in every way, and served with almost every sort of meat or fish. What we call bananas in the United States, however, are not called bananas in Martinique, but figs (figues). Plantains seem to be called "bananes." One is often surprised at popular nomenclature: "choux" may mean either a sort of root (choux-caraïbe), or the top of the cabbage-palm; "Jacquot" may mean a fish; "cabane" never means a cabin, but a bed; "crickett" means not a cricket, but a frog; and at least fifty other words have equally deceptive uses. If one desires to speak of real figs — dried figs — he must say "figues-fouance" (French figs): otherwise nobody will understand him. There are

The Market-Place, Fort de France



many kinds of bananas here called "figues"; — the four most popular are the figues-bananes, which are plantains, I think; the figues-makouenga, which grow wild, and have a red skin; the figues-pommes (apple-bananas), which are large and yellow; and the ti-figues-dessè (little-dessert-bananas), which are to be seen on all tables in Saint Pierre. They are small, sweet, and always agreeable, even when one has no appetite for other fruits.

It requires some little time to become accustomed to many tropical fruits, or at least to find patience as well as inclination to eat them. A large number, in spite of delicious flavor, are provokingly stony: such as the ripe guavas, the cherries, the barbadines; even the corossole and pomme-cannelle are little more than huge masses of very hard seeds buried in pulp of exquisite taste. The sapota, or sapodilla, is less characterized by stoniness, and one soon learns to like it. It has large flat seeds, which can be split into two with the finger-nail; and a fine white skin lies between these two halves. It requires some skill to remove entire this little skin, or pellicle, without breaking it: to do so is said to be a test of affection. Perhaps this bit of folk-lore was suggested by the shape of the pellicle, which is that of a heart. The pretty fille-de-couleur asks her doudoux: "Ess ou ainmein moin? — pouloss tiré ti lapeau-là sans cassé-y." Woe to him if he breaks it! . . . The most disagreeable fruit is, I think, the pomme-d'Haiti, or Haytian apple: it is very attractive exteriorly; but has a strong

musky odor and taste which nauseates. Few white Creoles ever eat it.

Of the oranges, nothing except praise can be said; but there are fruits that look like oranges, and are not oranges, that are far more noteworthy. There is the chadèque, which grows here to fully three feet in circumference, and has a sweet pink pulp; and there is the "forbidden-fruit" (fouitt-défendu), a sort of cross between the orange and the chadèque, and superior to both. The colored people declare that this monster fruit is the same which grew in Eden upon the fatal tree: c'est ça mênm qui fai moune ka fai yche conm ça atouèlement! The fouitt-défendu is wonderful, indeed, in its way; but the fruit which most surprised me on my first acquaintance with it was the zabricôt.

"Ou lè yon zabricôt?" (Would you like an apricot?) Cyrillia asked me one day. I replied that I liked apricots very much — wanted more than one. Cyrillia looked astonished, but said nothing until she returned from market, and put on the table *two* apricots, with the observation: "Ça ké fai ou malade mangé toutt ça!" (You will get sick if you eat all that.) I could not eat even half of one of them. Imagine a plum larger than the largest turnip, with a skin like a russet apple, solid sweet flesh of a carrot-red color, and a nut in the middle bigger than a duck's egg and hard as a rock. These fruits are aromatic as well as sweet to the taste: the price varies from one to four cents each, according to size. The tree is indigenous to the West Indies; the aborigines

of Hayti had a strange belief regarding it. They alleged that its fruits formed the nourishment of the dead; and however pressed by hunger, an Indian in the woods would rather remain without food than strip one of these trees, lest he should deprive the ghosts of their sustenance .... No trace of this belief seems to exist among the colored people of Martinique.

Among the poor such fruits are luxuries: they eat more mangoes than any other fruits excepting bananas. It is rather slobbery work eating a common mango, in which every particle of pulp is threaded fast to the kernel: one prefers to gnaw it when alone. But there are cultivated mangoes with finer and thicker flesh which can be sliced off, so that the greater part of the fruit may be eaten without smearing and sucking. Among grafted varieties the mangue is quite as delicious as the orange. Perhaps there are nearly as many varieties of mangoes in Martinique as there are varieties of peaches with us: I am acquainted, however, with only a few — such as the mango-Bassignac; — mango-pêche (or peach-mango); — mango-vert (green mango), very large and oblong; — mango-gréffé; — mangotine, quite round and small; — mango-quinette, very small also, almost egg-shaped; — mango-Zézé, very sweet, rather small, and of flattened form; — mango-d'or (golden mango), worth half a franc each; — mango-Lamentin, a highly cultivated variety; — and the superb Reine-Amélie (or Queen Amelia), a

great yellow fruit which retails even in Martinique at five cents apiece.

VIII

. . . "Ou c'est bonhomme càton? — ou c'est zimage, non?" (Am I a pasteboard man, or an image, that I do not eat?) Cyrillia wants to know. The fact is that I am a little overfed; but the stranger in the tropics cannot eat like a native, and my abstemiousness is a surprise. In the North we eat a good deal for the sake of caloric; in the tropics, unless one be in the habit of taking much physical exercise, which is a very difficult thing to do, a generous appetite is out of the question. Cyrillia will not suffer me to live upon mangé-créole altogether; she insists upon occasional beefsteaks and roasts, and tries to tempt me with all kinds of queer delicious desserts as well — particularly those cakes made of grated cocoanut and sugar-syrup (tablett-coco-rapé) of which a stranger becomes very fond. But, nevertheless, I cannot eat enough to quiet Cyrillia's fears.

Not eating enough is not her only complaint against me. I am perpetually doing something or other which shocks her. The Creoles are the most cautious livers in the world, perhaps; — the stranger who walks in the sun without an umbrella, or stands in currents of air, is for them an object of wonder and compassion. Cyrillia's complaints about my recklessness in the matter of hygiene always terminate with the refrain: "Yo pa fai ça içi." (People

never do such things in Martinique.) Among such rash acts are washing one's face or hands while perspiring, taking off one's hat on coming in from a walk, going out immediately after a bath, and washing my face with soap. "Oh, Cyrillia! what foolishness! — why should I not wash my face with soap?" "Because it will blind you," Cyrillia answers: "ça ké tchoué limiè zié ou" (it will kill the light in your eyes). There is no cleaner person than Cyrillia; and, indeed among the city people, the daily bath is the rule in all weathers; but soap is never used on the face by thousands, who, like Cyrillia, believe it will "kill the light of the eyes."

One day I had been taking a long walk in the sun, and returned so thirsty that all the old stories about travelers suffering in waterless deserts returned to memory with new significance; — visions of simooms arose before me. What a delight to see and to grasp the heavy, red, thick-lipped dobanne, the water-jar, dewy and cool with the exudation of the Eau-de-Gouyave which filled it to the brim — "toutt vivant," as Cyrillia says, "all alive"! There was a sudden scream — the water-pitcher was snatched from my hands by Cyrillia with the question: "Ess ou lè tchoué cò-ou? — Saint Joseph!" (Did I want to kill my body?) . . . The Creoles use the word "body" in speaking of anything that can happen to one — "hurt one's body," "tire one's body," "marry one's body," "bury one's body," etc.; — I wonder whether the expression originated in zealous desire

to prove a profound faith in the soul. . . . Then Cyrillia made me a little punch with sugar and rum, and told me I must never drink fresh-water after a walk unless I wanted to kill my body. In this matter her advice was good. The immediate result of a cold drink while heated is a profuse and icy perspiration, during which currents of air are really dangerous. A cold is not dreaded here, and colds are rare; but pleurisy is common, and may be the consequence of any imprudent exposure.

I do not often have the opportunity at home of committing even an unconscious imprudence; for Cyrillia is ubiquitous, and always on the watch lest something dreadful should happen to me. She is wonderful as a housekeeper as well as a cook: there is certainly much to do, and she has only a child to help her, but she always seems to have time. Her kitchen apparatus is of the simplest kind: a charcoal furnace constructed of bricks, a few earthenware pots (canari), and some gridirons; — yet with these she can certainly prepare as many dishes as there are days in the year. I have never known her to be busy with her canari for more than an hour; yet everything is kept in perfect order. When she is not working, she is quite happy in sitting at a window, and amusing herself by watching the life of the street — or playing with a kitten, which she has trained so well that it seems to understand everything she says.

IX

WITH darkness all the population of the island retire to their homes; — the streets become silent, and the life of the day is done. By eight o'clock nearly all the windows are closed, and the lights put out; — by nine the people are asleep. There are no evening parties, no night amusements, except during rare theatrical seasons and times of Carnival; there are no evening visits: active existence is almost timed by the rising and setting of the sun. . . . The only pleasure left for the stranger of evenings is a quiet smoke on his balcony or before his door: reading is out of the question, partly because books are rare, partly because lights are bad, partly because insects throng about every lamp or candle. I am lucky enough to have a balcony, broad enough for a rocking-chair; and sometimes Cyrillia and the kitten come to keep me company before bedtime. The kitten climbs on my knees; Cyrillia sits right down upon the balcony.

One bright evening, Cyrillia was amusing herself very much by watching the clouds: they were floating high; the moonlight made them brilliant as frost. As they changed shape under the pressure of the trade-wind, Cyrillia seemed to discover wonderful things in them: sheep, ships with sails, cows, faces, perhaps even zombis.

"Travaill Bon-Dié joli — anh?" (Is not the work of the Good-God pretty?) she said at last. . . .

"There was Madame Rémy, who used to sell the finest foulards and Madrases in Saint Pierre; — she used to study the clouds. She drew the patterns of the clouds for her foulards: whenever she saw a beautiful cloud or a beautiful rainbow, she would make a drawing of it in color at once; and then she would send that to France to have foulards made just like it. . . . Since she is dead, you do not see any more pretty foulards such as there used to be." . . .

"Would you like to look at the moon with my telescope, Cyrillia?" I asked. "Let me get it for you."

"Oh no, no!" she answered, as if shocked.

"Why?"

"Ah! faut pa gàdé baggaïe Bon-Dié conm ça!" (It is not right to look at the things of the Good-God that way.)

I did not insist. After a little silence, Cyrillia resumed:

"But I saw the Sun and the Moon once fighting together: that was what people call an *eclipse* — is not that the word? . . . They fought together a long time: I was looking at them. We put a terrine full of water on the ground, and looked into the water to see them. And the Moon is stronger than the Sun! — yes, the Sun was obliged to give way to the Moon. . . . Why do they fight like that?"

"They don't, Cyrillia."

"Oh, yes, they do. I saw them! . . . And the Moon is much stronger than the Sun!"

I did not attempt to contradict this testimony of the eyes. Cyrillia continued to watch the pretty clouds. Then she said:

"Would you not like to have a ladder long enough to let you climb up to those clouds, and see what they are made of?"

"Why, Cyrillia, they are only vapor — brume: I have been in clouds."

She looked at me in surprise, and, after a moment's silence, asked, with an irony of which I had not supposed her capable:

"Then you are the Good-God?"

"Why, Cyrillia, it is not difficult to reach clouds. You see clouds always upon the top of the Montagne Pelée; — people go there. I have been there — in the clouds."

"Ah! those are not the same clouds: those are not the clouds of the Good-God. You cannot touch the sky when you are on the Morne de la Croix."

"My dear Cyrillia, there is no sky to touch. The sky is only an appearance."

"Anh, anh, anh! No sky! — you say there is no sky? . . . Then, what is that up there?"

"That is air, Cyrillia, beautiful blue air."

"And what are the stars fastened to?"

"To nothing. They are suns, but so much farther away than our sun that they look small."

"No, they are not suns! They have not the same form as the sun. . . . You must not say there is no sky: it is wicked! But you are not a Catholic!"

"My dear Cyrillia, I don't see what that has to do with the sky."

"Where does the Good-God stay, if there be no sky? And where is heaven? — and where is hell?"

"Hell in the sky, Cyrillia?"

"The Good-God made heaven in one part of the sky, and hell in another part, for bad people. . . . Ah! you are a Protestant; — you do not know the things of the Good-God! That is why you talk like that."

"What is a Protestant, Cyrillia?"

"You are one. The Protestants do not believe in religion — do not love the Good-God."

"Well, I am neither a Protestant nor a Catholic, Cyrillia."

"Oh! you do not mean that; you cannot be a maudi, an accursed. There are only the Protestants, the Catholics, and the accursed. You are not a maudi, I am sure. But you must not say there is no sky." . . .

"But, Cyrillia —"

"No: I will not listen to you: — you are a Protestant. Where does the rain come from, if there is no sky?" . . .

"Why, Cyrillia . . . the clouds" . . .

"No, you are a Protestant. . . . How can you say such things? There are the Three Kings and the Three Valets — the beautiful stars that come at Christmas-time — there, over there —all beautiful, and big, big, big! . . . And you say there is no sky!"

"Cyrillia, perhaps I am a maudi."

"No, no! You are only a Protestant. But do not tell me there is no sky: it is wicked to say that!"

"I won't say it any more, Cyrillia — there! But I will say there are no zombis."

"I know you are not a maudi; — you have been baptized."

"How do you know I have been baptized?"

"Because, if you had not been baptized you would see zombis all the time, even in broad day. All children who are not baptized see zombis." . . .

X

CYRILLIA's solicitude for me extends beyond the commonplaces of hygiene and diet into the uncertain domain of matters ghostly. She fears much that something might happen to me through the agency of wizards, witches (sociès), or zombis. Especially zombis. Cyrillia's belief in zombis has a solidity that renders argument out of the question. This belief is part of her inner nature — something hereditary, racial, ancient as Africa, as characteristic of her people as the love of rhythms and melodies totally different from our own musical conceptions, but possessing, even for the civilized, an inexplicable emotional charm.

Zombi! — the word is perhaps full of mystery even for those who made it. The explanations of those who utter it most often are never quite lucid:

it seems to convey ideas darkly impossible to define — fancies belonging to the mind of another race and another era — unspeakably old. Perhaps the word in our own language which offers the best analogy is "goblin": yet the one is not fully translated by the other. Both have, however, one common ground on which they become indistinguishable — that region of the supernatural which is most primitive and most vague; and the closest relation between the savage and the civilized fancy may be found in the fears which we call childish — of darkness, shadows, and things dreamed. One form of the zombi-belief — akin to certain ghostly superstitions held by various primitive races — would seem to have been suggested by nightmare — that form of nightmare in which familiar persons become slowly and hideously transformed into malevolent beings. The zombi deludes under the appearance of a traveling companion, an old comrade — like the desert spirits of the Arabs — or even under the form of an animal. Consequently the Creole negro fears everything living which he meets after dark upon a lonely road — a stray horse, a cow, even a dog; and mothers quell the naughtiness of their children by the threat of summoning a zombi-cat or a zombi-creature of some kind. "Zombi ké nana ou" (the zombi will gobble thee up) is generally an effectual menace in the country parts, where it is believed zombis may be met with any time after sunset. In the city it is thought that their regular hours are between two

and four o'clock in the morning. At least so Cyrillia says:

"Dèzhè, toua-zhè-matin: c'est lhè zombi. Yo ka sòti dèzhè, toua zhè: c'est lhè yo. A quattrhè yo ka rentré; — angelus ka sonné." (At four o'clock they go back where they came from, before the *Angelus* rings.) Why?

"C'est pou moune pas joinne yo dans larue." (So that people may not meet with them in the street), Cyrillia answers.

"Are they afraid of the people, Cyrillia?" I asked.

"No, they are not afraid; but they do not want people to know their business" (pa lè moune ouè zaffai yo).

Cyrillia also says one must not look out of the window when a dog howls at night. Such a dog may be a mauvais vivant (evil being): "If he sees me looking at him he will say, 'Ou tropp quirièse quitté cabane ou pou gàdé zaffai lezautt.'" (You are too curious to leave your bed like that to look at other folks' business.)

"And what then, Cyrillia?"

"Then he will put out your eyes — y ké coqui zié ou — make you blind."

"But, Cyrillia," I asked one day, "did you ever see any zombis?"

"How? I often see them!... They walk about the room at night; — they walk like people. They sit in the rocking-chairs and rock themselves very softly, and look at me. I say to them: 'What do you

want here? — I never did any harm to anybody. Go away!' Then they go away."

"What do they look like?"

"Like people — sometimes like beautiful people (bel moune). I am afraid of them. I only see them when there is no light burning. While the lamp burns before the Virgin they do not come. But sometimes the oil fails, and the light dies."

In my own room there are dried palm leaves and some withered flowers fastened to the wall. Cyrillia put them there. They were taken from the reposoirs (temporary altars) erected for the last Corpus Christi procession: consequently they are blessed, and ought to keep the zombis away. That is why they are fastened to the wall, over my bed.

Nobody could be kinder to animals than Cyrillia usually shows herself to be: all the domestic animals in the neighborhood impose upon her; — various dogs and cats steal from her impudently, without the least fear of being beaten. I was therefore very much surprised to see her one evening catch a flying beetle that approached the light, and deliberately put its head in the candle-flame. When I asked her how she could be so cruel, she replied:

"Ah! ou pa connaitt choïe pays-ci." (You do not know Things in this country.)

The Things thus referred to I found to be supernatural Things. It is popularly believed that certain winged creatures which circle about candles at night may be engagés or envoyés — wicked people having

the power of transformation, or even zombis "sent" by witches or wizards to do harm. "There was a woman at Tricolore," Cyrillia says, "who used to sew a great deal at night; and a big beetle used to come into her room and fly about the candle, and bother her very much. One night she managed to get hold of it, and she singed its head in the candle. Next day, a woman who was her neighbor came to the house with her head all tied up. 'Ah! macoumè,' asked the sewing-woman, 'ça ou ni dans guiôle-ou?' And the other answered, very angrily, 'Ou ni toupet mandé moin ça moin ni dans guiôle moin! — et cété ou qui té brilé guiôle moin nans chandelle-ou hiè-souè.'" (You have the impudence to ask what is the matter with my mouth! and you yourself burned my mouth in your candle last night.)

Early one morning, about five o'clock, Cyrillia, opening the front door, saw a huge crab walking down the street. Probably it had escaped from some barrel; for it is customary here to keep live crabs in barrels and fatten them — feeding them with maize, mangoes, and, above all, green peppers: nobody likes to cook crabs as soon as caught; for they may have been eating manchineel apples at the river-mouths. Cyrillia uttered a cry of dismay on seeing that crab; then I heard her talking to herself: "*I* touch it? — never! it can go about its business. How do I know it is not *an arranged crab* (yon crabe rangé), or an envoyé? — since everybody knows I like crabs. For two sous I can buy a fine crab and know where it

comes from." The crab went on down the street: everywhere the sight of it created consternation; nobody dared to touch it; women cried out at it, "Miserabe! — envoyé Satan! — allez, maudi!" — some threw holy water on the crab. Doubtless it reached the sea in safety. In the evening Cyrillia said: "I think that crab was a little zombi; — I am going to burn a light all night to keep it from coming back."

Another day, while I was out, a negro to whom I had lent two francs came to the house, and paid his debt. Cyrillia told me when I came back, and showed me the money carefully enveloped in a piece of brown paper; but said I must not touch it — she would get rid of it for me at the market. I laughed at her fears; and she observed: "You do not know negroes, Missié! — negroes are wicked, negroes are jealous! I do not want you to touch that money, because I have not a good opinion about this affair."

After I began to learn more of the underside of Martinique life, I could understand the source and justification of many similar superstitions in simple and uneducated minds. The negro sorcerer is, at worst, only a poisoner; but he possesses a very curious art which long defied serious investigation, and in the beginning of the last century was attributed, even by whites, to diabolical influence. In 1721, 1723, and 1725, several negroes were burned alive at the stake as wizards in league with the devil. It was an era of comparative ignorance; but even now things are done which would astonish the most skeptical

and practical physician. For example, a laborer discharged from a plantation vows vengeance; and the next morning the whole force of hands — the entire atelier — are totally disabled from work. Every man and woman on the place is unable to walk; everybody has one or both legs frightfully swollen. Yo té ka pilé malifice: they have trodden on a "malifice." What is the "malifice"? All that can be ascertained is that certain little prickly seeds have been scattered all over the ground, where the barefooted workers are in the habit of passing. Ordinarily, treading on these seeds is of no consequence; but it is evident in such a case that they must have been prepared in a special way — soaked in some poison, perhaps snake-venom. At all events, the physician deems it safest to treat the inflammations after the manner of snake wounds; and after many days the hands are perhaps able to resume duty.

XI

WHILE Cyrillia is busy with her canari, she talks to herself or sings. She has a low rich voice — sings strange things, things that have been forgotten by this generation — Creole songs of the old days, having a weird rhythm and fractions of tones that are surely African. But more generally she talks to herself, as all the Martiniquaises do: it is a continual murmur as of a stream. At first I used to think she was talking to somebody else, and would call out:

"Épi quiless moune ça ou ka pàlé-à?"

But she would always answer: "Moin ka pàlé anni cò moin" (I am only talking to my own body), which is the Creole expression for talking to one's self.

"And what are you talking so much to your own body about, Cyrillia?"

"I am talking about my own little affairs" (ti zaffai-moin). . . . That is all that I could ever draw from her.

But when not working, she will sit for hours looking out of the window. In this she resembles the kitten: both seem to find the same silent pleasure in watching the street, or the green heights that rise above its roofs — the Morne d'Orange. Occasionally at such times she will break the silence in the strangest way, if she thinks I am not too busy with my papers to answer a question:

"Missié?" — timidly.

"Eh?"

"Di moin, chè, ti manmaille dans pays ou, toutt piti, piti — ess ça pàlé Anglais?" (Do the little children in my country — the very, very little children — talk English?)

"Why, certainly, Cyrillia."

"Toutt piti, piti?" — with growing surprise.

"Why, of course!"

"C'est drôle, ça!" (It is queer, that!) She cannot understand it.

"And the little manmaille in Martinique, Cyrillia — toutt piti, piti — don't they talk Creole?"

"Oui; mais toutt moune ka pàlé nègue: ça facile."

(Yes; but anybody can talk negro — that is easy to learn.)

XII

CYRILLIA's room has no furniture in it: the Martinique bonne lives as simply and as rudely as a domestic animal. One thin mattress covered with a sheet, and elevated from the floor only by a léfant, forms her bed. The léfant, or "elephant," is composed of two thick square pieces of coarse hard mattress stuffed with shavings, and placed end to end. Cyrillia has a good pillow, however — bourré épi flêches-canne — filled with the plumes of the sugar-cane. A cheap trunk with broken hinges contains her modest little wardrobe: a few mouchoirs, or kerchiefs, used for head-dresses, a spare douillette, or long robe, and some tattered linen. Still she is always clean, neat, fresh-looking. I see a pair of sandals in the corner — such as the women of the country sometimes wear — wooden soles with a leather band for the instep, and two little straps; but she never puts them on. Fastened to the wall are two French prints — lithographs: one representing Victor Hugo's "Esmeralda" in prison with her pet goat; the other, Lamartine's "Laurence" with her fawn. Both are very old and stained and bitten by the bête-à-ciseau, a species of lepisma, which destroys books and papers, and everything it can find exposed. On a shelf are two bottles — one filled with holy water; another with tafia camphrée (camphor

dissolved in tafia), which is Cyrillia's sole remedy for colds, fevers, headaches — all maladies not of a very fatal description. There are also a little woollen monkey, about three inches high — the dusty plaything of a long-dead child; — an image of the Virgin, even smaller; — and a broken cup with fresh bright blossoms in it, the Virgin's flower-offering; — and the Virgin's invariable lamp — a night-light, a little wick floating on olive-oil in a tiny glass.

I know that Cyrillia must have bought these flowers — they are garden flowers — at the Marchè du Fort. There are always old women sitting there who sell nothing else but bouquets for the Virgin — and who cry out to passers-by: "Gagné ti bouquet pou Viège-ou, chè! . . . Buy a nosegay, dear, for your Virgin; — she is asking you for one; — give her a little one, chè cocott." . . . Cyrillia says you must not smell the flowers you give the Virgin: it would be stealing from her. . . . The little lamp is always lighted at six o'clock. At six o'clock the Virgin is supposed to pass through all the streets of Saint Pierre, and wherever a lamp burns before her image, she enters there and blesses that house. "Faut limé lampe ou pou fai la-Viège passé dans caïe-ou," says Cyrillia. (You must light the lamp to make the Virgin come into your house.) . . . Cyrillia often talks to her little image, exactly as if it were a baby — calls it pet names — asks if it is content with the flowers.

This image of the Virgin is broken: it is only half

a Virgin — the upper half. Cyrillia has arranged it so, nevertheless, that had I not been very inquisitive I should never have divined its mishap. She found a small broken powder-box without a lid — probably thrown negligently out of a boudoir window by some wealthy beauty: she filled this little box with straw, and fixed the mutilated image upright within it, so that you could never suspect the loss of its feet. The Virgin looks very funny, thus peeping over the edge of her little box — looks like a broken toy, which a child has been trying to mend. But this Virgin has offerings too: Cyrillia buys flowers for her, and sticks them all round her, between the edge of the powder-box and the straw. After all, Cyrillia's Virgin is quite as serious a fact as any image of silver or of ivory in the homes of the rich: probably the prayers said to her are more simply beautiful, and more direct from the heart, than many daily murmured before the chapelles of luxurious homes. And the more one looks at it, the more one feels that it were almost wicked to smile at this little broken toy of faith.

"Cyrillia, mafi," I asked her one day, after my discovery of the little Virgin — "would you not like me to buy a chapelle for you?" The chapelle is the little bracket-altar, together with images and ornaments, to be found in every Creole bedroom.

"Mais non, Missié," she answered, smiling, "moin aimein ti Viège moin, pa lè gagnin dautt. I love my little Virgin: do not want any other. I have seen

much trouble: she was with me in my trouble; — she heard my prayers. It would be wicked for me to throw her away. When I have a sou to spare, I buy flowers for her; — when I have no money, I climb the mornes, and pick pretty buds for her. . . . But why should Missié want to buy me a chapelle? — Missié is a Protestant?"

"I thought it might give you pleasure, Cyrillia."

"No, Missié, I thank you; it would not give me pleasure. But Missié could give me something else which would make me very happy — I often thought of asking Missié . . . but —"

"Tell me what it is, Cyrillia."

She remained silent a moment, then said:

"Missié makes photographs. . . ."

"You want a photograph of yourself, Cyrillia?"

"Oh! no, Missié, I am too ugly and too old. But I have a daughter. She is beautiful — yon bel bois — like a beautiful tree, as we say here. I would like so much to have her picture taken."

A photographic instrument belonging to a clumsy amateur suggested this request to Cyrillia. I could not attempt such work successfully; but I gave her a note to a photographer of much skill; and a few days later the portrait was sent to the house. Cyrillia's daughter was certainly a comely girl — tall and almost gold-colored, with pleasing features; and the photograph looked very nice, though less nice than the original. Half the beauty of these people is a beauty of tint — a tint so exquisite sometimes that

I have even heard white Creoles declare no white complexion compares with it: the greater part of the charm remaining is grace — the grace of movement; and neither of these can be rendered by photography. I had the portrait framed for Cyrillia, to hang up beside her little pictures.

When it came, she was not in; I put it in her room, and waited to see the effect. On returning, she entered there; and I did not see her for so long a time that I stole to the door of the chamber to observe her. She was standing before the portrait — looking at it, talking to it as if it were alive. "Yche moin, yche moin! . . . Oui! ou toutt bel! — yche moin bel." (My child, my child! . . . Yes, thou art all beautiful: my child is beautiful.) All at once she turned — perhaps she noticed my shadow, or felt my presence in some way: her eyes were wet; — she started, flushed, then laughed.

"Ah! Missié, you watch me; — ou guetté moin. . . . But she is my child. Why should I not love her? . . . She looks so beautiful there."

"She is beautiful, Cyrillia; — I love to see you love her."

She gazed at the picture a little longer in silence; — then turned to me again, and asked earnestly:

"Pouki yo pa ka fai pòtrai pàlé — anh? . . . pisse yo ka tiré y toutt samm ou: c'est ou-menm! . . . Yo douè fai y palé 'tou." (Why do they not make a portrait talk — tell me? For they draw it just all like you! — it is yourself: they ought to make it talk.)

"Perhaps they will be able to do something like that one of these days, Cyrillia."

"Ah! that would be so nice. Then I could talk to her. C'est yon bel moune moin fai — y bel, joli moune! . . . Moin sé causé épi y." . . .

. . . And I, watching her beautiful childish emotion, thought: Curséd be the cruelty that would persuade itself that one soul may be like another — that one affection may be replaced by another — that individual goodness is not a thing apart, original, untwinned on earth, but only the general characteristic of a class or type, to be sought and found and utilized at will! . . . Self-curséd he who denies the divinity of love! Each heart, each brain in the billions of humanity — even so surely as sorrow lives — feels and thinks in some special way unlike any other; and goodness in each has its unlikeness to all other goodness — and thus its own infinite preciousness; for however humble, however small, it is something all alone, and God never repeats his work. No heart-beat is cheap, no gentleness is despicable, no kindness is common; and Death, in removing a life — the simplest life ignored — removes what never will reappear through the eternity of eternities — since every being is the sum of a chain of experiences infinitely varied from all others. . . . To some Cyrillia's happy tears might bring a smile: to me that smile would seem the unforgivable sin against the Giver of Life! . . .

"PA COMBINÉ, CHÈ!"

I

. . . MORE finely than any term in our tongue does the French word "frisson" express that faint shiver — as of a ghostly touch thrilling from hair to feet — which intense pleasure sometimes gives, and which is felt most often and most strongly in childhood, when the imagination is still so sensitive and so powerful that one's whole being trembles to the vibration of a fancy. And this electric word best expresses, I think, that long thrill of amazed delight inspired by the first knowledge of the tropic world — a sensation of weirdness in beauty, like the effect, in child-days, of fairy tales and stories of phantom isles.

For all unreal seems the vision of it. The transfiguration of all things by the stupendous light and the strange vapors of the West Indian sea — the interorbing of flood and sky in blinding azure — the sudden spirings of gem-tinted coast from the ocean — the iris-colors and astounding shapes of the hills — the unimaginable magnificence of palms — the high woods veiled and swathed in vines that blaze like emerald: all remind you in some queer way of things half forgotten — the fables of enchantment. Enchantment it is indeed — but only the enchantment of that Great Wizard, the Sun, whose power you are scarcely beginning to know.

And into the life of the tropical city you enter as in dreams one enters into the life of a dead century. In all the quaint streets — over whose luminous yellow façades the beautiful burning violet of the sky appears as if but a few feet away — you see youth good to look upon as ripe fruit; and the speech of the people is soft as a coo; and eyes of brown girls caress you with a passing look. . . . Love's world, you may have heard, has few restraints here, where Nature ever seems to cry out, like the swart seller of corossoles: "Ça qui lè doudoux?" . . .

How often in some passing figure does one discern an ideal almost realized, and forbear to follow it with untired gaze only when another, another, and yet another, come to provoke the same æsthetic fancy — to win the same unspoken praise! How often does one long for artist's power to fix the fleeting lines, to catch the color, to seize the whole exotic charm of some special type! . . . One finds a strange charm even in the timbre of these voices — these half-breed voices, always with a tendency to contralto, and vibrant as ringing silver. What is that mysterious quality in a voice which has power to make the pulse beat faster, even when the singer is unseen? . . . do only the birds know?

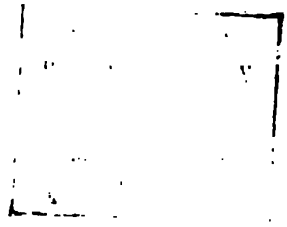
. . . It seems to you that you could never weary of watching this picturesque life — of studying the costumes, brilliant with butterfly colors — and the statuesque semi-nudity of laboring hundreds — and the untaught grace of attitudes — and the simplicity

of manners. Each day brings some new pleasure of surprise; — even from the window of your lodging you are ever noting something novel, something to delight the sense of oddity or beauty. . . . Even in your room everything interests you, because of its queerness or quaintness: you become fond of the objects about you — the great noiseless rocking-chairs that lull to sleep; — the immense bed (lit-à-bateau) of heavy polished wood, with its richly carven sides reaching down to the very floor; — and its invariable companion, the little couch or sopha, similarly shaped but much narrower, used only for the siesta; — and the thick red earthen vessels (dobannes) which keep your drinking-water cool on the hottest days, but which are always filled thrice between sunrise and sunset with clear water from the mountain — dleau toutt vivant, "all alive"; — and the verrines, tall glass vases with stems of bronze in which your candle will burn steadily despite a draught; — and even those funny little angels and Virgins which look at you from their bracket in the corner, over the oil lamp you are presumed to kindle nightly in their honor, however great a heretic you may be. . . . You adopt at once, and without reservation, those Creole home habits which are the result of centuries of experience with climate — abstention from solid food before the middle of the day, repose after the noon meal; — and you find each repast an experience as curious as it is agreeable. It is not at all difficult to accustom one's self

to green peas stewed with sugar, eggs mixed with tomatoes, salt fish stewed in milk, palmiste pith made into salad, grated cocoa formed into rich cakes, and dishes of titiri cooked in oil — the minuscule fish, of which a thousand will scarcely fill a saucer. Above all, you are astonished by the endless variety of vegetables and fruits, of all conceivable shapes and inconceivable flavors.

And it does not seem possible that even the simplest little recurrences of this antiquated, gentle home-life could ever prove wearisome by daily repetition through the months and years. The musical greeting of the colored child, tapping at your door before sunrise — "Bonjou', Missié" — as she brings your cup of black hot coffee and slice of corossole; — the smile of the silent brown girl who carries your meals upstairs in a tray poised upon her brightly coiffed head, and who stands by while you dine, watching every chance to serve, treading quite silently with her pretty bare feet; — the pleasant manners of the màchanne who brings your fruit, the porteuse who delivers your bread, the blanchisseuse who washes your linen at the river — and all the kindly folk who circle about your existence, with their trays and turbans, their foulards and douillettes, their primitive grace and Creole chatter: these can never cease to have a charm for you. You cannot fail to be touched also by the amusing solicitude of these good people for your health, because you are a stranger: their advice about hours to go out and hours to stay

An Old Sugar-Mill



at home — about roads to follow and paths to avoid on account of snakes — about removing your hat and coat, or drinking while warm. . . . Should you fall ill, this solicitude intensifies to devotion; you are tirelessly tended; — the good people will exhaust their wonderful knowledge of herbs to get you well — will climb the mornes even at midnight, in spite of the risk of snakes and fear of zombis, to gather strange plants by the light of a lantern. Natural joyousness, natural kindliness, heartfelt desire to please, childish capacity of being delighted with trifles — seem characteristic of all this colored population. It is turning its best side toward you, no doubt; but the side of the nature made visible appears none the less agreeable because you suspect there is another which you have not seen. What kindly inventiveness is displayed in contriving surprises for you, or in finding some queer thing to show you — some fantastic plant, or grotesque fish, or singular bird! What apparent pleasure in taking trouble to gratify — what innocent frankness of sympathy! . . . Childishly beautiful seems the readiness of this tinted race to compassionate: you do not reflect that it is also a savage trait, while the charm of its novelty is yet upon you. No one is ashamed to shed tears for the death of a pet animal; any mishap to a child creates excitement, and evokes an immediate volunteering of services. And this compassionate sentiment is often extended, in a semi-poetical way, even to inanimate objects. One June morning, I remember, a three-masted schooner lying

in the bay took fire, and had to be set adrift. An immense crowd gathered on the wharves; and I saw many curious manifestations of grief — such grief, perhaps, as an infant feels for the misfortune of a toy it imagines to possess feeling, but not the less sincere because unreasoning. As the flames climbed the rigging, and the masts fell, the crowd moaned as though looking upon some human tragedy; and everywhere one could hear such strange cries of pity as, "Pauv' malhérè!" (poor unfortunate), "pauv' diabe!"... "Toutt baggaïe-y pou allé, cassé!" (All its things-to-go-with are broken!) sobbed a girl, with tears streaming down her cheeks.... She seemed to believe it was alive....

... And day by day the artlessness of this exotic humanity touches you more; — day by day this savage, somnolent, splendid Nature — delighting in furious color — bewitches you more. Already the anticipated necessity of having to leave it all some day — the far-seen pain of bidding it farewell — weighs upon you, even in dreams.

II

READER, if you be of those who have longed in vain for a glimpse of that tropic world — tales of whose beauty charmed your childhood, and made stronger upon you that weird mesmerism of the sea which pulls at the heart of a boy — one who had longed like you, and who, chance-led, beheld at last the fulfill-

ment of the wish, can swear to you that the magnificence of the reality far excels the imagining. Those who know only the lands in which all processes for the satisfaction of human wants have been perfected under the terrible stimulus of necessity, can little guess the witchery of that Nature ruling the zones of color and of light. Within their primeval circles, the earth remains radiant and young as in that preglacial time whereof some transmitted memory may have created the hundred traditions of an Age of Gold. And the prediction of a paradise to come — a phantom realm of rest and perpetual light: may this not have been but a sum of the remembrances and the yearnings of man first exiled from his heritage — a dream born of the great nostalgia of races migrating to people the pallid North? . . .

. . . But with the realization of the hope to know this magical Nature you learn that the actuality varies from the preconceived ideal otherwise than in surpassing it. Unless you enter the torrid world equipped with scientific knowledge extraordinary, your anticipations are likely to be at fault. Perhaps you had pictured to yourself the effect of perpetual summer as a physical delight — something like an indefinite prolongation of the fairest summer weather ever enjoyed at home. Probably you had heard of fevers, risks of acclimatization, intense heat, and a swarming of venomous creatures; but you may nevertheless believe you know what precautions to take;

and published statistics of climatic temperature may have persuaded you that the heat is not difficult to bear. By that enervation to which all white dwellers in the tropics are subject you may have understood a pleasant languor — a painless disinclination to effort in a country where physical effort is less needed than elsewhere — a soft temptation to idle away the hours in a hammock, under the shade of giant trees. Perhaps you have read, with eyes of faith, that torpor of the body is favorable to activity of the mind, and therefore believe that the intellectual powers can be stimulated and strengthened by tropical influences: — you suppose that enervation will reveal itself only as a beatific indolence which will leave the brain free to think with lucidity, or to revel in romantic dreams.

III

You are not at first undeceived; — the disillusion is long delayed. Doubtless you have read the delicious idyl of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (this is not Mauritius, but the old life of Mauritius was well-nigh the same); and you look for idyllic personages among the beautiful humanity about you — for idyllic scenes among the mornes shadowed by primeval forest, and the valleys threaded by a hundred brooks. I know not whether the faces and forms that you seek will be revealed to you; — but you will not be able to complain for the lack of idyllic loveliness in the commonest landscape. Whatever artistic knowledge you possess will merely teach you the more to wonder at the

luxuriant purple of the sea, the violet opulence of the sky, the violent beauty of foliage greens, the lilac tints of evening, and the color-enchantments distance gives in an atmosphere full of iridescent power — the amethysts and agates, the pearls and ghostly golds, of far mountainings. Never, you imagine, never could one tire of wandering through those marvelous valleys — of climbing the silent roads under emeraldine shadow to heights from which the city seems but a few inches long, and the moored ships tinier than gnats that cling to a mirror — or of swimming in that blue bay whose clear flood stays warm through all the year.[1] Or, standing alone, in some aisle of colossal palms, where humming-birds are flashing and shooting like a showering of jewel-fires, you feel how weak the skill of poet or painter to fix the sensation of that white-pillared imperial splendor; — and you think you know why Creoles exiled by necessity to colder lands may sicken for love of their own — die of home-yearning, as did many a one in far Louisiana, after the political tragedies of 1848. . . .

. . . But you are not a Creole, and must pay tribute of suffering to the climate of the tropics. You will have to learn that a temperature of 90° F. in the tropics is by no means the same thing as 90° F. in Europe or the United States; — that the mornes cannot be

[1] Rufz remarks that the first effect of this climate of the Antilles is a sort of general physical excitement, an exaltation, a sense of unaccustomed strength — which begets the desire of immediate action to discharge the surplus of nervous force. "Then all distances seem brief; — the greatest fatigues are braved without hesitation." (*Études.*)

climbed with safety during the hotter hours of the afternoon; — that by taking a long walk you incur serious danger of catching a fever; — that to enter the high woods, a path must be hewn with the cutlass through the creepers and vines and undergrowth — among snakes, venomous insects, venomous plants, and malarial exhalations; — that the finest blown dust is full of irritant and invisible enemies; — that it is folly to seek repose on a sward, or in the shade of trees — particularly under tamarinds. Only after you have by experience become well convinced of these facts can you begin to comprehend something general in regard to West Indian conditions of life.

IV

. . . SLOWLY the knowledge comes. . . . For months the vitality of a strong European (the American constitution bears the test even better) may resist the debilitating climate: perhaps the stranger will flatter himself that, like men habituated to heavy labor in stifling warmth — those toiling in mines, in foundries, in engine-rooms of ships, at iron-furnaces — so he too may become accustomed, without losing his strength, to the continuous draining of the pores, to the exhausting force of this strange motionless heat which compels change of clothing many times a day. But gradually he finds that it is not heat alone which is debilitating him, but the weight and septic nature of an atmosphere charged with vapor, with electricity, with unknown agents not less inimical to human ex-

istence than propitious to vegetal luxuriance. If he has learned those rules of careful living which served him well in a temperate climate, he will not be likely to abandon them among his new surroundings; and they will help him, no doubt — particularly if he be prudent enough to avoid the seacoast at night, and all exposure to dews or early morning mists, and all severe physical strain. Nevertheless, he becomes slowly conscious of changes extraordinary going on within him — in especial, a continual sensation of weight in the brain, daily growing, and compelling frequent repose; — also a curious heightening of nervous sensibility to atmospheric changes, to tastes and odors, to pleasure and pain. Total loss of appetite soon teaches him to follow the local custom of eating nothing solid before midday, and enables him to divine how largely the necessity for caloric enters into the food-consumption of Northern races. He becomes abstemious, eats sparingly, and discovers his palate to have become oddly exacting — finds that certain fruits and drinks are, indeed, as the Creoles assert, appropriate only to particular physical conditions corresponding with particular hours of the day. Corossole is only to be eaten in the morning, after black coffee; — vermouth is good to drink only between the hours of nine and half-past ten; — rum or other strong liquor only before meals or after fatigue; — claret or wine only during a repast, and then very sparingly — for, strangely enough, wine is found to be injurious in a country where stronger liquors are

considered among the prime necessaries of existence.

And he expected, at the worst, to feel lazy, to lose some physical energy! But this is no mere languor which now begins to oppress him; — it is a sense of vital exhaustion painful as the misery of convalescence: the least effort provokes a perspiration profuse enough to saturate clothing, and the limbs ache as from muscular overstrain; — the lightest attire feels almost insupportable; — the idea of sleeping even under a sheet is torture, for the weight of a silken handkerchief is discomfort. One wishes one could live as a savage — naked in the heat. One burns with a thirst impossible to assuage — feels a desire for stimulants, a sense of difficulty in breathing, occasional quickenings of the heart's action so violent as to alarm. Then comes at last the absolute dread of physical exertion. Some slight relief might be obtained, no doubt, by resigning one's self forthwith to adopt the gentle indolent manners of the white Creoles, who do not walk when it is possible to ride, and never ride if it is equally convenient to drive; — but the Northern nature generally refuses to accept this ultimate necessity without a protracted and painful struggle.

. . . Not even then has the stranger fully divined the evil power of this tropical climate, which remodels the characters of races within a couple of generations — changing the shape of the skeleton — deepening the cavities of the orbits to protect the eye from the flood of light — transforming the blood

— darkening the skin. Following upon the nervous modifications of the first few months come modifications and changes of a yet graver kind; — with the loss of bodily energy ensues a more than corresponding loss of mental activity and strength. The whole range of thought diminishes, contracts — shrinks to that narrowest of circles which surrounds the physical self, the inner ring of merely material sensation: the memory weakens appallingly; — the mind operates faintly, slowly, incoherently — almost as in dreams. Serious reading, vigorous thinking, become impossible. You doze over the most important project; — you fall fast asleep over the most fascinating of books.

Then comes the vain revolt, the fruitless desperate striving with this occult power which numbs the memory and enchants the will. Against the set resolve to think, to act, to study, there is a hostile rush of unfamiliar pain to the temples, to the eyes, to the nerve centres of the brain; and a great weight is somewhere in the head, always growing heavier: then comes a drowsiness that overpowers and stupefies, like the effect of a narcotic. And this obligation to sleep, to sink into coma, will impose itself just so surely as you venture to attempt any mental work in leisure hours, after the noon repast, or during the heat of the afternoon. Yet at night you can scarcely sleep. Repose is made feverish by a still heat that keeps the skin drenched with thick sweat, or by a perpetual, unaccountable, tingling and prickling of

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the whole body-surface. With the approach of morning the air grows cooler, and slumber comes — a slumber of exhaustion, dreamless and sickly; and perhaps when you would rise with the sun you feel such a dizziness, such a numbness, such a torpor, that only by the most intense effort can you keep your feet for the first five minutes. You experience a sensation that recalls the poet's fancy of death-in-life, or old stories of sudden rising from the grave: it is as though all the electricity of will had ebbed away — all the vital force evaporated, in the heat of the night. . . .

V

It might be stated, I think, with safety, that for a certain class of invalids the effect of the climate is like a powerful stimulant — a tonic medicine which may produce astonishing results within a fixed time — but which if taken beyond that time will prove dangerous. After a certain number of months, your first enthusiasm with your new surroundings dies out; — even Nature ceases to affect the senses in the same way: the frisson ceases to come to you. Meanwhile you may have striven to become as much as possible a part of the exotic life into which you have entered — may have adopted its customs, learned its language. But you cannot mix with it mentally; — you circulate only as an oil-drop in its current. You still feel yourself alone.

The very longest West Indian day is but twelve

hours fifty-six minutes; — perhaps your first dissatisfaction was evoked by the brevity of the days. There is no twilight whatever; and all activity ceases with sundown: there is no going outside of the city after dark, because of snakes; — club life here ends at the hour it only begins abroad; — there is no visiting of evenings; after the seven o'clock dinner, every one prepares to retire. And the foreigner, accustomed to make evening a time for social intercourse, finds no small difficulty in resigning himself to this habit of early retiring. The natural activity of a European or American mind requires some intellectual exercise — at least some interchange of ideas with sympathetic natures; the hours during the suspension of business after noon, or those following the closing of offices at sunset, are the only ones in which busy men may find time for such relaxation; and these very hours have been always devoted to restorative sleep by the native population ever since the colony began. Naturally, therefore, the stranger dreads the coming of the darkness, the inevitable isolation of long sleepless hours. And if he seek those solaces for loneliness which he was wont to seek at home — reading, study — he is made to comprehend, as never before, what the absence of all libraries, lack of books, inaccessibility of all reading-matter, means for the man of the nineteenth century. One must send abroad to obtain even a review, and wait months for its coming. And this mental starvation gnaws at the brain more and

more as one feels less inclination and less capacity for effort, and as that single enjoyment, which at first rendered a man indifferent to other pleasures — the delight of being alone with tropical Nature — becomes more difficult to indulge. When lethargy has totally mastered habit and purpose, and you must at last confess yourself resigned to view Nature from your chamber, or at best from a carriage window — then, indeed, the want of all literature proves a positive torture. It is not a consolation to discover that you are an almost solitary sufferer — from climate as well as from mental hunger. With amazement and envy you see young girls passing to walk right across the island and back before sunset, under burdens difficult for a strong man to lift to his shoulder; — the same journey on horseback would now weary you for days. You wonder of what flesh and blood can these people be made — what wonderful vitality lies in those slender woman-bodies, which, under the terrible sun, and despite their astounding expenditure of force, remain cool to the sight and touch as bodies of lizards and serpents! And contrasting this savage strength with your own weakness, you begin to understand better how mighty the working of those powers which temper races and shape race habits in accordance with environment.

. . . Ultimately, if destined for acclimatation, you will cease to suffer from these special conditions; but ere this can be, a long period of nervous irritability must be endured; and fevers must thin the blood,

soften the muscles, transform the Northern tint of health to a dead brown. You will have to learn that intellectual pursuits can be persisted in only at risk of life; — that in this part of the world there is nothing to do but to plant cane and cocoa, and make rum, and cultivate tobacco — or open a magazine for the sale of Madras handkerchiefs and foulards — and eat, drink, sleep, perspire. You will understand why the tropics settled by European races produce no sciences, arts, or literature — why the habits and the thoughts of other centuries still prevail where Time itself moves slowly as though enfeebled by the heat.

And with the compulsory indolence of your life, the long exacerbation of the nervous system, will come the first pain of nostalgia — the first weariness of the tropics. It is not that Nature can become ever less lovely to your sight; but that the tantalization of her dangerous beauty, which you may enjoy only at a safe distance, exasperates at last. The colors that at first bewitched will vex your eyes by their violence; — the Creole life that appeared so simple, so gentle, will reveal dulnesses and discomforts undreamed of. You will ask yourself how much longer can you endure the prodigious light, and the furnace heat of blinding blue days, and the void misery of sleepless nights, and the curse of insects, and the sound of the mandibles of enormous roaches devouring the few books in your possession. You will grow weary of the grace of the palms, of the gemmy colors

of the ever-clouded peaks, of the sight of the high woods made impenetrable by lianas and vines and serpents. You will weary even of the tepid sea, because to enjoy it as a swimmer you must rise and go out at hours while the morning air is still chill and heavy with miasma; — you will weary, above all, of tropic fruits, and feel that you would gladly pay a hundred francs for the momentary pleasure of biting into one rosy juicy Northern apple.

VI

. . . But if you believe this disillusion perpetual — if you fancy the old bewitchment has spent all its force upon you — you do not know this Nature. She is not done with you yet: she has only torpefied your energies a little. Of your willingness to obey her, she takes no cognizance; — she ignores human purposes, knows only molecules and their combinations; and the blind blood in your veins — thick with Northern heat and habit — is still in dumb desperate rebellion against her.

Perhaps she will quell this revolt forever — thus:

One day, in the second hour of the afternoon, a few moments after leaving home, there will come to you a sensation such as you have never known before: a sudden weird fear of the light.

It seems to you that the blue sky-fire is burning down into your brain — that the flare of the white pavements and yellow walls is piercing somehow into your life — creating an unfamiliar mental con-

fusion — blurring out thought. . . . Is the whole world taking fire? . . . The flaming azure of the sea dazzles and pains like a crucible-glow; — the green of the mornes flickers and blazes in some amazing way. . . . Then dizziness inexpressible: you grope with eyes shut fast — afraid to open them again in that stupefying torrefaction — moving automatically — vaguely knowing you must get out of the flaring and flashing — somewhere, anywhere away from the white wrath of the sun, and the green fire of the hills, and the monstrous color of the sea. . . . Then, remembering nothing, you find yourself in bed — with an insupportable sense of weight at the back of the head — a pulse beating furiously — and a strange sharp pain at intervals stinging through your eyes. . . . And the pain grows; expands — fills all the skull — forces you to cry out — replaces all other sensations except a weak consciousness, vanishing and recurring, that you are very sick, more sick than ever before in all your life.

. . . And with the tedious ebbing of the long fierce fever, all the heat seems to pass from your veins. You can no longer imagine, as before, that it would be delicious to die of cold; — you shiver even with all the windows closed; — you feel currents of air — imperceptible to nerves in a natural condition — which shock like a dash of cold water, whenever doors are opened and closed; the very moisture upon your forehead is icy. What you now wish for

are stimulants and warmth. Your blood has been changed; — tropic Nature has been good to you: she is preparing you to dwell with her.

. . . Gradually, under the kind nursing of those colored people — among whom, as a stranger, your lot will probably be cast — you recover strength; and perhaps it will seem to you that the pain of lying awhile in the Shadow of Death is more than compensated by this rare and touching experience of human goodness. How tirelessly watchful — how naïvely sympathetic — how utterly self-sacrificing these women-natures are! Patiently, through weeks of stifling days and sleepless nights — cruelly unnatural to them, for their life is in the open air — they struggle to save without one murmur of fatigue, without heed of their most ordinary physical wants, without a thought of recompense; — trusting to their own skill when the physician abandons hope — climbing to the woods for herbs when medicines prove without avail. The dream of angels holds nothing sweeter than this reality of woman's tenderness.

And simultaneously with the return of force, you may wonder whether this sickness has not sharpened your senses in some extraordinary way — especially hearing, sight, and smell. Once well enough to be removed without danger, you will be taken up into the mountains somewhere — for change of air; and there it will seem to you, perhaps, that never before did you feel so acutely the pleasure of perfumes —

of color-tones — of the timbre of voices. You have simply been acclimated. . . . And suddenly the old fascination of tropic Nature seizes you again — more strongly than in the first days; — the frisson of delight returns; the joy of it thrills through all your blood — making a great fullness at your heart as of unutterable desire to give thanks. . . .

VII

. . . My friend Félicien had come to the colony fresh from the region of the Vosges, with the muscles and energies of a mountaineer, and cheeks pink as a French country-girl's; — he had never seemed to me physically adapted for acclimation; and I feared much for him on hearing of his first serious illness. Then the news of his convalescence came to me as a grateful surprise. But I did not feel reassured by his appearance the first evening I called at the little house to which he had been removed, on the brow of a green height overlooking the town. I found him seated in a berceuse on the veranda. How wan he was, and how spectral his smile of welcome — as he held out to me a hand that seemed all of bone!

. . . We chatted there awhile. It had been one of those tropic days whose charm interpenetrates and blends with all the subtler life of sensation, and becomes a luminous part of it forever — steeping all after-dreams of ideal peace in supernal glory of color — transfiguring all fancies of the pure joy of being. Azure to the sea-line the sky had remained since

morning; and the trade-wind, warm as a caress, never brought even one gauzy cloud to veil the naked beauty of the peaks.

And the sun was yellowing — as only over the tropics he yellows to his death. Lilac tones slowly spread through sea and heaven from the west; — mornes facing the light began to take wondrous glowing color — a tone of green so fiery that it looked as though all the rich sap of their woods were phosphorescing. Shadows blued; — far peaks took tinting that scarcely seemed of earth — iridescent violets and purples interchanging through vapor of gold. . . . Such the colors of the carangue, when the beautiful tropic fish is turned in the light, and its gem-greens shift to rich azure and prism-purple.

Reclining in our chairs, we watched the strange splendor from the veranda of the little cottage — saw the peaked land slowly steep itself in the aureate glow — the changing color of the verdured mornes, and of the sweep of circling sea. Tiny birds, bosomed with fire, were shooting by in long curves, like embers flung by invisible hands. From far below, the murmur of the city rose to us — a stormy hum. So motionless we remained that the green and gray lizards were putting out their heads from behind the columns of the veranda to stare at us — as if wondering whether we were really alive. I turned my head suddenly to look at two queer butterflies; and all the lizards hid themselves again. "Papillon-lanmò" (Death's butterflies) these were called in

the speech of the people: their broad wings were black like blackest velvet; — as they fluttered against the yellow light, they looked like silhouettes of butterflies. Always through my memory of that wondrous evening — when I little thought I was seeing my friend's face for the last time — there slowly passes the black palpitation of those wings. . . .

. . . I had been chatting with Félicien about various things which I thought might have a cheerful interest for him; and more than once I had been happy to see him smile. . . . But our converse waned. The ever-magnifying splendor before us had been mesmerizing our senses — slowly overpowering our wills with the amazement of its beauty. Then, as the sun's disk — enormous — blinding gold — touched the lilac flood, and the stupendous orange glow flamed up to the very zenith, we found ourselves awed at last into silence.

The orange in the west deepened into vermilion. Softly and very swiftly night rose like an indigo exhalation from the land — filling the valleys, flooding the gorges, blackening the woods, leaving only the points of the peaks a while to catch the crimson glow. Forests and fields began to utter a rushing sound as of torrents, always deepening — made up of the instrumentation and the voices of numberless little beings: clangings as of hammered iron, ringings as of dropping silver upon a stone, the dry bleatings of the cabritt-bois, and the chirruping of tree-frogs, and the *ki-i-i-i-i-i-i* of crickets. Immense trembling

sparks began to rise and fall among the shadows — twinkling out and disappearing all mysteriously: these were the fireflies awakening. Then about the branches of the bois-canon black shapes began to hover, which were not birds — shapes flitting processionally without any noise; each one in turn resting a moment as to nibble something at the end of a bough; — then yielding place to another, and circling away, to return again from the other side . . . the guimbos, the great bats.

But we were silent, with the emotion of sunset still upon us: that ghostly emotion which is the transmitted experience of a race — the sum of ancestral experiences innumerable — the mingled joy and pain of a million years. . . . Suddenly a sweet voice pierced the stillness — pleading:

"Pa combiné, chè! — pa combiné conm ça!" (Do not think, dear! — do not think like that!)

. . . Only less beautiful than the sunset she seemed, this slender half-breed, who had come all unperceived behind us, treading soundlessly with her slim bare feet. . . . "And you, Missié," she said to me, in a tone of gentle reproach; — "you are his friend! why do you let him think? It is thinking that will prevent him getting well."

"Combiné" in Creole signifies to think intently, and therefore to be unhappy — because, with this artless race, as with children, to think intensely about anything is possible only under great stress of suffering.

"Pa combiné — non, chè," she repeated, plaintively, stroking Félicien's hair. "It is thinking that makes us old. . . . And it is time to bid your friend good-night." . . .

"She is so good," said Félicien, smiling to make her pleased; "I could never tell you how good. But she does not understand. She believes I suffer if I am silent. She is contented only when she sees me laugh; and so she will tell me Creole stories by the hour to keep me amused, as if I were a child." . . .

As he spoke she slipped an arm about his neck.

"Doudoux," she persisted; — and her voice was a dove's coo — "Si ou ainmein moin, pa combiné — non!"

And in her strange exotic beauty, her savage grace, her supple caress, the velvet witchery of her eyes — it seemed to me that I beheld a something imaged, not of herself, nor of the moment only — a something weirdly sensuous: the Spirit of tropic Nature made golden flesh, and murmuring to each lured wanderer: "*If thou wouldst love me, do not think!*". . .

YÉ

I

ALMOST every night, just before bedtime, I hear some group of children in the street telling stories to each other. Stories, enigmas or tim-tim, and songs, and round games, are the joy of child-life here — whether rich or poor. I am particularly fond of listening to the stories — which seem to me the oddest stories I ever heard.

I succeeded in getting several dictated to me, so that I could write them; — others were written for me by Creole friends, with better success. To obtain them in all their original simplicity and naïve humor of detail, one should be able to write them down in short-hand as fast as they are related: they lose greatly in the slow process of dictation. The simple mind of the native story-teller, child or adult, is seriously tried by the inevitable interruptions and restraints of the dictation method; — the reciter loses spirit, becomes soon weary, and purposely shortens the narrative to finish the task as soon as possible. It seems painful to such a one to repeat a phrase more than once — at least in the same way; while frequent questioning may irritate the most good-natured in a degree that shows how painful to the untrained brain may be the exercise of memory and steady control of imagination required for continuous dictation. By

patience, however, I succeeded in obtaining many curiosities of oral literature — representing a group of stories which, whatever their primal origin, have been so changed by local thought and coloring as to form a distinctively Martinique folk-tale circle. Among them are several especially popular with the children of my neighborhood; and I notice that almost every narrator embellishes the original plot with details of his own, which he varies at pleasure.

I submit a free rendering of one of these tales — the history of Yé and the Devil. The whole story of Yé would form a large book — so numerous the list of his adventures; and this adventure seems to me the most characteristic of all. Yé is the most curious figure in Martinique folk-lore. Yé is the typical Bitaco — or mountain negro of the lazy kind — the country black whom city blacks love to poke fun at. As for the Devil of Martinique folk-lore, he resembles the travailleur at a distance; but when you get dangerously near him, you find that he has red eyes and red hair, and two little horns under his chapeau-Bacouè, and feet like an ape, and fire in his throat. Y ka sam yon gouôs, gouôs macaque. . . .

II

Ça qui pa té connaitt Yé? . . . Who is there in all Martinique who never heard of Yé? Everybody used to know the old rascal. He had every fault under the sun; — he was the laziest negro in the whole island; he was the biggest glutton in the whole world. He

had an amazing number [1] of children; and they were most of the time all half dead for hunger.

Well, one day Yé went out to the woods to look for something to eat. And he walked through the woods nearly all day, till he became ever so tired; but he could not find anything to eat. He was just going to give up the search, when he heard a queer crackling noise — at no great distance. He went to see what it was — hiding himself behind the big trees as he got nearer to it.

All at once he came to a little hollow in the woods, and saw a great fire burning there — and he saw a Devil sitting beside the fire. The Devil was roasting a great heap of snails; and the sound Yé had heard was the crackling of the snail-shells. The Devil seemed to be very old; — he was sitting on the trunk of a bread-fruit tree; and Yé took a good long look at him. After Yé had watched him for a while, Yé found out that the old Devil was quite blind.

The Devil had a big calabash in his hand full of féroce — that is to say, boiled salt codfish and manioc flour, with ever so many pimentos (épi en pile piment) — just what negroes like Yé are most fond of. And the Devil seemed to be very hungry; and the food was going so fast down his throat that it made Yé unhappy to see it disappearing. It made him so unhappy that he felt at last he could not resist the temptation to steal from the old blind Devil. He crept quite close up to the Devil without making any

[1] In the patois, "yon rafale yche" — a "whirlwind of children."

noise, and began to rob him. Every time the Devil would lift his hand to his mouth, Yé would slip his own fingers into the calabash, and snatch a piece. The old Devil did not even look puzzled; — he did not seem to know anything; and Yé thought to himself that the old Devil was a great fool. He began to get more and more courage; — he took bigger and bigger handfuls out of the calabash; — he ate even faster than the Devil could eat. At last there was only one little bit left in the calabash. Yé put out his hand to take it — and all of a sudden the Devil made a grab at Yé's hand and caught it! Yé was so frightened he could not even cry out, Aïe-yaïe! The Devil finished the last morsel, threw down the calabash, and said to Yé in a terrible voice: — "Atò, saff! — ou c'est ta moin!" (I've got you now, you glutton; — you belong to me!) Then he jumped on Yé's back, like a great ape, and twisted his legs round Yé's neck, and cried out:

"Carry me to your cabin — and walk fast!"

. . . When Yé's poor children saw him coming, they wondered what their papa was carrying on his back. They thought it might be a sack of bread or vegetables or perhaps a régime of bananas — for it was getting dark, and they could not see well. They laughed and showed their teeth and danced and screamed: "Here 's papa coming with something to eat! — papa 's coming with something to eat!" But when Yé had got near enough for them to see what he was

carrying, they yelled and ran away to hide themselves. As for the poor mother, she could only hold up her two hands for horror.

When they got into the cabin the Devil pointed to a corner, and said to Yé: "Put me down there!" Yé put him down. The Devil sat there in the corner and never moved or spoke all that evening and all that night. He seemed to be a very quiet Devil indeed. The children began to look at him.

But at breakfast-time, when the poor mother had managed to procure something for the children to eat — just some bread-fruit and yams — the old Devil suddenly rose up from his corner and muttered:

"Manman mò! — papa mò! — toutt yche mò!" (Mamma dead! — papa dead! — all the children dead!)

And he blew his breath on them, and they all fell down stiff as if they were dead — raidi-cadave! Then the Devil ate up everything there was on the table. When he was done, he filled the pots and dishes with dirt, and blew his breath again on Yé and all the family, and muttered:

"Toutt moune lévé!" (Everybody get up!)

Then they all got up. Then he pointed to all the plates and dishes full of dirt, and said to them:[1]

"Gobe-moin ça!"

And they had to gobble it all up, as he told them.

After that it was no use trying to eat anything.

[1] In the original: "Y té ka monté assous tabe-là, épi y té ka fai caca adans toutt plats-à, adans toutt zassiett-là."

Every time anything was cooked, the Devil would do the same thing. It was thus the next day, and the next, and the day after, and so every day for a long, long time.

Yé did not know what to do; but his wife said she did. If she was only a man, she would soon get rid of that Devil. "Yé," she insisted, "go and see the Bon-Dié [the Good-God], and ask him what to do. I would go myself if I could; but women are not strong enough to climb the great morne."

So Yé started off very, very early one morning, before the peep of day, and began to climb the Montagne Pelée. He climbed and walked, and walked and climbed, until he got at last to the top of the Morne de la Croix.[1] Then he knocked at the sky as loud as he could till the Good-God put his head out of a cloud and asked him what he wanted:

"Eh bien! — ça ou ni, Yé? ça ou lè?"

When Yé had recounted his troubles, the Good-God said:

"Pauv ma pauv! I knew it all before you came, Yé. I can tell you what to do; but I am afraid it will be no use — you will never be able to do it! Your gluttony is going to be the ruin of you, poor Yé! Still, you can try. Now listen well to what I am going to tell you. First of all, you must not eat anything before you get home. Then, when your wife has the

[1] A peaklet rising above the verge of the ancient crater now filled with water.

children's dinner ready, and you see the Devil getting up, you must cry out: 'Tam ni pou tam ni bé!' Then the Devil will drop down dead. Don't forget not to eat anything — ou tanne?" . . .

Yé promised to remember all he was told, and not to eat anything on his way down; — then he said good-bye to the Bon-Dié (bien conm y faut), and started. All the way he kept repeating the words the Good-God had told him: "Tam ni pou tam ni bé! — tam ni pou tam ni bé!" — over and over again.

But before reaching home he had to cross a little stream; and on both banks he saw wild guava-bushes growing, with plenty of sour guavas upon them; — for it was not yet time for guavas to be ripe. Poor Yé was hungry! He did all he could to resist the temptation, but it proved too much for him. He broke all his promises to the Bon-Dié: he ate and ate and ate till there were no more guavas left — and then he began to eat zicaques and green plums, and all sorts of nasty sour things, till he could not eat any more.

By the time he got to the cabin his teeth were so on edge that he could scarcely speak distinctly enough to tell his wife to get the supper ready.

And so while everybody was happy, thinking that they were going to be freed from their trouble, Yé was really in no condition to do anything. The moment the supper was ready, the Devil got up from his corner as usual, and approached the table. Then Yé tried to speak; but his teeth were so on edge that

instead of saying — "Tam ni pou tam ni bè," he could only stammer out:

"Anni toqué Diabe-là cagnan."

This had no effect on the Devil at all: he seemed to be used to it! He blew his breath on them all, sent them to sleep, ate up all the supper, filled the empty dishes with filth, awoke Yé and his family, and ordered them as usual:

"Gobe-moin-ça!" And they had to gobble it up — every bit of it.

The family nearly died of hunger and disgust. Twice more Yé climbed the Montagne Pelée; twice more he climbed the Morne de la Croix; twice more he disturbed the poor Bon-Dié, all for nothing! — since each time on his way down he would fill his paunch with all sorts of nasty sour things, so that he could not speak right. The Devil remained in the house night and day; — the poor mother threw herself down on the ground, and pulled out her hair — so unhappy she was!

But luckily for the poor woman, she had one child as cunning as a rat[1] — a boy called "Ti Fonté" (Little Impudent), who bore his name well. When he saw his mother crying so much, he said to her:

"Mamma, send papa just once more to see the Good-God: I know something to do!"

The mother knew how cunning her boy was: she

[1] The great field-rat of Martinique is, in Martinique folk-lore, the symbol of all cunning, and probably merits its reputation.

felt sure he meant something by his words; — she sent old Yé for the last time to see the Bon-Dié.

Yé used always to wear one of those big long coats they call "lavalasses"; — whether it was hot or cool, wet or dry, he never went out without it. There were two very big pockets in it — one on each side. When Ti Fonté saw his father getting ready to go, he jumped *floup!* into one of the pockets and hid himself there. Yé climbed all the way to the top of the Morne de la Croix without suspecting anything. When he got there the little boy put one of his ears out of Yé's pocket — so as to hear everything the Good-God would say.

This time he was very angry — the Bon-Dié: he spoke very crossly; he scolded Yé a great deal. But he was so kind for all that — he was so generous to good-for-nothing Yé, that he took the pains to repeat the words over and over again for him: "Tam ni pou tam ni bé." . . . And this time the Bon-Dié was not talking to no purpose: there was somebody there well able to remember what he said. Ti Fonté made the most of his chance; — he sharpened that little tongue of his; he thought of his mamma and all his little brothers and sisters dying of hunger down below. As for his father, Yé did as he had done before — stuffed himself with all the green fruit he could find.

The moment Yé got home and took off his coat, Ti Fonté jumped out, *plapp!* — and ran to his mamma, and whispered:

"Mamma, get ready a nice, big dinner! — we are going to have it all to ourselves to-day: the Good-God did n't talk for nothing — I heard every word he said!"

Then the mother got ready a nice calalou-crabe, a ton-ton-banane, a matété-cirique — several calabashes of cousscaye, two régimes-figues (bunches of small bananas) — in short, a very fine dinner indeed, with a chopine of tafia to wash it all well down.

The Devil felt as sure of himself that day as he had always felt, and got up the moment everything was ready. But Ti Fonté got up too, and yelled out just as loud as he could:

"Tam ni pou tam ni bé!"

At once the Devil gave a scream so loud that it could be heard right down to the bottom of hell — and he fell dead.

Meanwhile, Yé, like the old fool he was, kept trying to say what the Bon-Dié had told him, and could only mumble:

"Anni toqué Diabe-là cagnan!"

He would never have been able to do anything; — and his wife had a great mind just to send him to bed at once, instead of letting him sit down to eat all those nice things. But she was a kind-hearted soul; and so she let Yé stay and eat with the children, though he did not deserve it. And they all ate and ate, and kept on eating and filling themselves until daybreak — pauv piti!

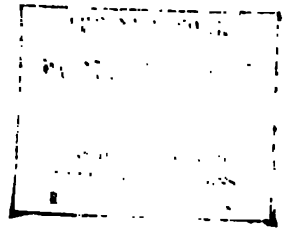
But during this time the Devil had begun to smell badly, and he had become swollen so big that Yé found he could not move him. Still, they knew they must get him out of the way somehow. The children had eaten so much that they were all full of strength — yo té plein lafòce; and Yé got a rope and tied one end round the Devil's foot; and then he and the children — all pulling together — managed to drag the Devil out of the cabin and into the bushes, where they left him just like a dead dog. They all felt themselves very happy to be rid of that old Devil.

But some days after old good-for-nothing Yé went off to hunt for birds. He had a whole lot of arrows with him. He suddenly remembered the Devil, and thought he would like to take one more look at him. And he did.

Fouinq! what a sight! The Devil's belly had swelled up like a morne: it was yellow and blue and green — looked as if it was going to burst. And Yé, like the old fool he always was, shot an arrow up in the air, so that it fell down and stuck into the Devil's belly. Then he wanted to get the arrow, and he climbed up on the Devil, and pulled and pulled till he got the arrow out. Then he put the point of the arrow to his nose — just to see what sort of a smell dead Devils had.

The moment he did that, his nose swelled up as big as the refinery-pot of a sugar-plantation.

A Basket-Maker



Yé could scarcely walk for the weight of his nose; but he had to go and see the Bon-Dié again. The Bon-Dié said to him:

"Ah! Yé, my poor Yé, you will live and die a fool! — you are certainly the biggest fool in the whole world! . . . Still, I must try to do something for you; — I'll help you anyhow to get rid of that nose! . . . I'll tell you how to do it. To-morrow morning, very early, get up and take a big taya (whip), and beat all the bushes well, and drive all the birds to the Roche de la Caravelle. Then you must tell them that I, the Bon-Dié, want them to take off their bills and feathers, and take a good bath in the sea. While they are bathing, you can choose a nose for yourself out of the heap of bills there."

Poor Yé did just as the Good-God told him; and while the birds were bathing, he picked out a nose for himself from the heap of beaks — and left his own refinery-pot in its place.

The nose he took was the nose of the coulivicou.[1] And that is why the coulivicou always looks so much ashamed of himself even to this day.

III

. . . Poor Yé! — you still live for me only too vividly outside of those strange folk-tales of eating and of

[1] The coulivicou, or "Colin Vicou," is a Martinique bird with a long meagre body, and an enormous bill. It has a very tristful and taciturn expression. . . . Maig conm yon coulivicou, "thin as a coulivicou," is a popular comparison for the appearance of anybody much reduced by sickness.

drinking which so cruelly reveal the long slave-hunger of your race. For I have seen you cutting cane on peak slopes above the clouds; — I have seen you climbing from plantation to plantation with your cutlass in your hand, watching for snakes as you wander to look for work, when starvation forces you to obey a master, though born with the resentment of centuries against all masters; — I have seen you prefer to carry two hundred-weight of bananas twenty miles to market, rather than labor in the fields; — I have seen you ascending through serpent-swarming woods to some dead crater to find a cabbage-palm — and always hungry — and always shiftless! And you are still a great fool, poor Yé! — and you have still your swarm of children — your rafale yche; — and they are famished; for you have taken into your ajoupa a Devil who devours even more than you can earn — even your heart, and your splendid muscles, and your poor artless brain — the Devil Tafia! . . . And there is no Bon-Dié to help you rid yourself of him now: for the only Bon-Dié you ever really had, your old Creole master, cannot care for you any more, and you cannot care for yourself. Mercilessly moral, the will of this enlightened century has abolished forever that patriarchal power which brought you up strong and healthy on scanty fare, and scourged you into its own idea of righteousness, yet kept you innocent as a child of the law of the struggle for life. But you feel that law now; — you are a citizen of the Republic!

you are free to vote, and free to work, and free to starve if you prefer it, and free to do evil and suffer for it; — and this new knowledge stupefies you so that you have almost forgotten how to laugh!

LYS

I

It is only half-past four o'clock: there is the faintest blue light of beginning day — and little Victoire already stands at the bedside with my wakening cup of hot black fragrant coffee. What! so early? . . . Then with a sudden heart-start I remember this is my last West Indian morning. And the child — her large timid eyes all gently luminous — is pressing something into my hand.

Two vanilla beans wrapped in a morsel of banana-leaf — her poor little farewell gift! . . .

Other trifling souvenirs are already packed away. Almost everybody that knows me has given me something. Manm-Robert brought me a tiny packet of orange-seeds — seeds of a "gift-orange": so long as I can keep these in my vest-pocket I will never be without money. Cyrillia brought me a package of bouts, and a pretty box of French matches, warranted inextinguishable by wind. Azaline, the blanchisseuse, sent me a little pocket looking-glass. Cerbonnie, the màchanne, left a little cup of guava jelly for me last night. Mimi — dear child! — brought me a little paper dog! It is her best toy; but those gentle black eyes would stream with tears if I dared to refuse it. . . . Oh, Mimi! what am I to do with a little paper dog? And what am I to do with the

chocolate-sticks and the cocoanuts and all the sugar-cane and all the cinnamon-apples? . . .

II

. . . TWENTY minutes past five by the clock of the Bourse. The hill shadows are shrinking back from the shore; — the long wharves reach out yellow into the sun; — the tamarinds of the Place Bertin, and the pharos for half its height, and the red-tiled roofs along the bay are catching the glow. Then, over the lighthouse — on the outermost line depending from the southern yard-arm of the semaphore — a big black ball suddenly runs up like a spider climbing its own thread. . . . *Steamer from the South!* The packet has been sighted. And I have not yet been able to pack away into a specially purchased wooden box all the fruits and vegetable curiosities and odd little presents sent to me. If Radice the boatman had not come to help me, I should never have been able to get ready; for the work of packing is being continually interrupted by friends and acquaintances coming to say good-bye. Manm-Robert brings to see me a pretty young girl — very fair, with a violet foulard twisted about her blonde head. It is little Basilique, who is going to make her pouémiè communion. So I kiss her, according to the old colonial custom, once on each downy cheek; — and she is to pray to Notre Dame du Bon Port that the ship shall bear me safely to far-away New York.

And even then the steamer's cannon-call shakes

over the town and into the hills behind us, which answer with all the thunder of their phantom artillery.

III

. . . THERE is a young white lady, accompanied by an aged negress, already waiting on the south wharf for the boat; — evidently she is to be one of my fellow-passengers. Quite a pleasing presence: slight graceful figure — a face not precisely pretty, but delicate and sensitive, with the odd charm of violet eyes under black eyebrows. . . .

A friend who comes to see me off tells me all about her. Mademoiselle Lys is going to New York to be a governess — to leave her native island forever. A story sad enough, though not more so than that of many a gentle Creole girl. And she is going all alone; for I see her bidding good-bye to old Titine — kissing her. "Adié encò, chè; — Bon-Dié ké béni ou!" sobs the poor servant, with tears streaming down her kind black face. She takes off her blue shoulder-kerchief, and waves it as the boat recedes from the wooden steps.

. . . Fifteen minutes later, Mademoiselle and I find ourselves under the awnings shading the saloon-deck of the Guadeloupe. There are at least fifty passengers — many resting in chairs, lazy-looking Demerara chairs with arm-supports immensely lengthened so as to form rests for the lower limbs.

Overhead, suspended from the awning-frames, are two tin cages containing parrots; — and I see two little greenish monkeys, no bigger than squirrels, tied to the wheel-hatch — two sakiwinkis. These are from the forests of British Guiana. They keep up a continual thin sharp twittering, like birds — all the while circling, ascending, descending, retreating or advancing to the limit of the little ropes attaching them to the hatch.

The Guadeloupe has seven hundred packages to deliver at Saint Pierre: we have ample time — Mademoiselle Violet-Eyes and I — to take one last look at the "Pays des Revenants."

I wonder what her thoughts are, feeling a singular sympathy for her — for I am in that sympathetic mood which the natural emotion of leaving places and persons one has become fond of, is apt to inspire. And now at the moment of my going — when I seem to understand as never before the beauty of that tropic Nature, and the simple charm of the life to which I am bidding farewell — the question comes to me: "Does she not love it all as I do — nay, even much more, because of that in her own existence which belongs to it?" But as a child of the land, she has seen no other skies — fancies, perhaps, there may be brighter ones. . . .

. . . Nowhere on this earth, Violet-Eyes! — nowhere beneath this sun! . . . Oh! the dawnless glory of tropic morning! — the single sudden leap of the giant light over the purpling of a hundred peaks —

over the surging of the mornes! And the early breezes from the hills — all cool out of the sleep of the forests, and heavy with vegetal odors thick, sappy, savage-sweet! — and the wild high winds that run ruffling and crumpling through the cane of the mountain slopes in storms of papery sound! —

And the mighty dreaming of the woods — green-drenched with silent pouring of creepers — dashed with the lilac and yellow and rosy foam of liana flowers! —

And the eternal azure apparition of the all-circling sea — that as you mount the heights ever appears to rise perpendicularly behind you — that seems, as you descend, to sink and flatten before you! —

And the violet velvet distances of evening; — and the swaying of palms against the orange-burning — when all the heaven seems filled with vapors of a molten sun! . . .

IV

How beautiful the mornes and azure-shadowed hollows in the jewel-clearness of this perfect morning! Even Pelée wears only her very lightest head-dress of gauze; and all the wrinklings of her green robe take unfamiliar tenderness of tint from the early sun. All the quaint peaking of the colored town — sprinkling the sweep of blue bay with red and yellow and white-of-cream — takes a sharpness in this limpid light as if seen through a diamond lens; and there above the living green of the familiar hills I

can see even the faces of the statues — the black Christ on his white cross, and the White Lady of the Morne d'Orange — among upcurving palms. . . . It is all as though the island were donning its utmost possible loveliness, exerting all its witchery — seeking by supremest charm to win back and hold its wandering child — Violet-Eyes over there! . . . She is looking too.

I wonder if she sees the great palms of the Voie du Parnasse — curving far away as to bid us adieu, like beautiful bending women. I wonder if they are not trying to say something to her; and I try myself to fancy what that something is:

"Child, wilt thou indeed abandon all who love thee! . . . Listen! — 't is a dim gray land thou goest unto — a land of bitter winds — a land of strange gods — a land of hardness and barrenness, where even Nature may not live through half the cycling of the year! Thou wilt never see us there. . . . And there, when thou shalt sleep thy long sleep, child, that land will have no power to lift thee up; — vast weight of stone will press thee down forever; — until the heavens be no more thou shalt not awake! . . . But here, darling, our loving roots would seek for thee, would find thee: thou shouldst live again! — we lift, like Aztec priests, the blood of hearts to the Sun!" . . .

V

. . . It is very hot. . . . I hold in my hand a Japanese paper-fan with a design upon it of the simplest sort: one jointed green bamboo, with a single spurt of sharp leaves, cutting across a pale blue murky double streak that means the horizon above a sea. That is all. Trivial to my Northern friends this design might seem; but to me it causes a pleasure bordering on pain. . . . I know so well what the artist means; and they could not know, unless they had seen bamboos — and bamboos peculiarly situated. As I look at this fan I know myself descending the Morne Parnasse by the steep winding road; I have the sense of windy heights behind me, and forest on either hand, and before me the blended azure of sky and sea with one bamboo-spray swaying across it at the level of my eyes. Nor is this all; — I have the every sensation of the very moment — the vegetal odors, the mighty tropic light, the warmth, the intensity of irreproducible color. . . . Beyond a doubt, the artist who dashed the design on this fan with his miraculous brush must have had a nearly similar experience to that of which the memory is thus aroused in me, but which I cannot communicate to others.

. . . And it seems to me now that all which I have tried to write about the Pays des Revenants can only be for others, who have never beheld it — vague like the design upon this fan.

VI

Brrrrrrrrrr! . . . The steam-winch is lifting the anchor; and the Guadeloupe trembles through every plank as the iron torrent of her chain-cable rumbles through the hawse-holes. . . . At last the quivering ceases; — there is a moment's silence; and Violet-Eyes seems trying to catch a last glimpse of her faithful bonne among the ever-thickening crowd upon the quay. . . . Ah! there she is — waving her foulard. Mademoiselle Lys is waving a handkerchief in reply. . . .

Suddenly the shock of the farewell gun shakes heavily through our hearts, and over the bay — where the tall mornes catch the flapping thunder, and buffet it through all their circle in tremendous mockery. Then there is a great whirling and whispering of whitened water behind the steamer — another — another; and the whirl becomes a foaming stream: the mighty propeller is playing! . . . All the blue harbor swings slowly round; — and the green limbs of the land are pushed out further on the left, shrink back upon the right; — and the mountains are moving their shoulders. And then the many-tinted façades — and the tamarinds of the Place Bertin — and the lighthouse — and the long wharves with their throng of turbaned women — and the cathedral towers — and the fair palms — and the statues of the hills — all veer, change place, and begin to float away . . . steadily, very swiftly.

Farewell, fair city — sun-kissed city — many-fountained city! — dear yellow-glimmering streets — white pavements learned by heart — and faces ever looked for — and voices ever loved! Farewell, white towers with your golden-throated bells! — farewell, green steeps, bathed in the light of summer everlasting! — craters with your coronets of forest! — bright mountain paths upwinding 'neath pomp of fern and angelin and feathery bamboo! — and gracious palms that drowse above the dead! Farewell, soft-shadowing majesty of valleys unfolding to the sun — green golden cane-fields ripening to the sea! . . .

. . . The town vanishes. The island slowly becomes a green silhouette. So might Columbus first have seen it from the deck of his caravel — nearly four hundred years ago. At this distance there are no more signs of life upon it than when it first became visible to his eyes: yet there are cities there — and toiling — and suffering — and gentle hearts that knew me. . . . Now it is turning blue — the beautiful shape! — becoming a dream. . . .

VII

And Dominica draws nearer — sharply massing her hills against the vast light in purple nodes and gibbosities and denticulations. Closer and closer it comes, until the green of its heights breaks through the purple here and there — in flashings and rib-

bings of color. Then it remains as if motionless awhile; — then the green lights go out again — and all the shape begins to recede sideward toward the south.

. . . And what had appeared a pearl-gray cloud in the north slowly reveals itself as another island of mountains — hunched and horned and mammiform: Guadeloupe begins to show her double profile. But Martinique is still visible; — Pelée still peers high over the rim of the south. . . . Day wanes; — the shadow of the ship lengthens over the flower-blue water. Pelée changes aspect at last — turns pale as a ghost — but will not fade away. . . .

. . . The sun begins to sink as he always sinks to his death in the tropics — swiftly — too swiftly! — and the glory of him makes golden all the hollow west — and bronzes all the flickering wave-backs. But still the gracious phantom of the island will not go — softly haunting us through the splendid haze. And always the tropic wind blows soft and warm; — there is an indescribable caress in it! Perhaps some such breeze, blowing from Indian waters, might have inspired that prophecy of Islam concerning the Wind of the Last Day — that "Yellow Wind, softer than silk, balmier than musk" — which is to sweep the spirits of the just to God in the great Winnowing of Souls. . . .

Then into the indigo night vanishes forever from my eyes the ghost of Pelée; and the moon swings up — a young and lazy moon, drowsing upon her back,

as in a hammock. . . . Yet a few nights more, and we shall see this slim young moon erect — gliding upright on her way — coldly beautiful like a fair Northern girl.

VIII

AND ever through tepid nights and azure days the Guadeloupe rushes on — her wake a river of snow beneath the sun, a torrent of fire beneath the stars — steaming straight for the North.

Under the peaking of Montserrat we steam — beautiful Montserrat, all softly wrinkled like a robe of greenest velvet fallen from the waist! — breaking the pretty sleep of Plymouth town behind its screen of palms . . . young palms, slender and full of grace as Creole children are; —

And by tall Nevis, with her trinity of dead craters purpling through ocean-haze; — by clouded Saint Christopher's mountain-giant; — past ghostly Saint Martin's, far-floating in fog of gold, like some dream of the Saint's own Second Summer; —

Past low Antigua's vast blue harbor — shark-haunted, bounded about by huddling of little hills, blue and green; —

Past Santa Cruz, the "Island of the Holy Cross" — all radiant with verdure though well-nigh woodless — nakedly beautiful in the tropic light as a perfect statue; —

Past the long cerulean reaching and heaping of Porto Rico on the left, and past hopeless Saint

Thomas on the right — old Saint Thomas, watching the going and the coming of the commerce that long since abandoned her port — watching the ships once humbly solicitous for patronage now turning away to the Spanish rival, like ingrates forsaking a ruined patrician; —

And the vapory Vision of Saint John; — and the gray ghost of Tortola — and farther, fainter, still more weirdly dim, the aureate phantom of Virgin Gorda.

IX

THEN only the enormous double-vision of sky and sea.

The sky: a cupola of blinding blue, shading down and paling into spectral green at the rim of the world — and all fleckless, save at evening. Then, with sunset, comes a light gold-drift of little feathery cloudlets into the West — stippling it as with a snow of fire.

The sea: no flower-tint may now make any comparison for the splendor of its lucent color. It has shifted its hue; — for we have entered into the Azure Stream: it has more than the magnificence of burning cyanogen. . . .

But, at night, the Cross of the South appears no more. And other changes come, as day succeeds to day — a lengthening of the hours of light, a longer lingering of the after-glow — a cooling of the wind. Each morning the air seems a little cooler, a little

rarer; — each noon the sky looks a little paler, a little farther away — always heightening, yet also more shadowy, as if its color, receding, were dimmed by distance — were coming more faintly down from vaster altitudes.

. . . Mademoiselle is petted like a child by the lady passengers. And every man seems anxious to aid in making her voyage a pleasant one. For much of which, I think, she may thank her eyes!

X

A DIM morning and chill; — blank sky and sunless waters: the sombre heaven of the North with colorless horizon rounding in a blind gray sea. . . . What a sudden weight comes to the heart with the touch of the cold mist, with the spectral melancholy of the dawn! — and then what foolish though irrepressible yearning for the vanished azure left behind!

. . . The little monkeys twitter plaintively, trembling in the chilly air. The parrots have nothing to say: they look benumbed, and sit on their perches with eyes closed.

. . . A vagueness begins to shape itself along the verge of the sea, far to port: that long heavy clouding which indicates the approach of land. And from it now floats to us something ghostly and frigid which makes the light filmy and the sea shadowy as a flood of dreams — the fog of the Jersey coast.

At once the engines slacken their respiration. The

Guadeloupe begins to utter her steam-cry of warning — regularly at intervals of two minutes — for she is now in the track of all the ocean vessels. And from far away we can hear a heavy knelling — the booming of some great fog-bell.

. . . All in a white twilight. The place of the horizon has vanished; — we seem ringed in by a wall of smoke. . . . Out of this vapory emptiness — very suddenly — an enormous steamer rushes, towering like a hill — passes so close that we can see faces, and disappears again, leaving the sea heaving and frothing behind her.

. . . As I lean over the rail to watch the swirling of the wake, I feel something pulling at my sleeve: a hand — a tiny black hand — the hand of a sakiwinki. [One of the little monkeys, straining to the full length of his string, is making this dumb appeal for human sympathy; — the bird-black eyes of both are fixed upon me with the oddest look of pleading. Poor little tropical exiles! I stoop to caress them; but regret the impulse a moment later: they utter such beseeching cries when I find myself obliged to leave them again alone! . . .

. . . Hour after hour the Guadeloupe glides on through the white gloom — cautiously, as if feeling her way; always sounding her whistle, ringing her bells, until at last some brown-winged bark comes flitting to us out of the mist, bearing a pilot. . . . How strange it must all seem to Mademoiselle who

stands so silent there at the rail! — how weird this veiled world must appear to her, after the sapphire light of her own West Indian sky, and the great lazulite splendor of her own tropic sea!

But a wind comes! — it strengthens — begins to blow very cold. The mists thin before its blowing; and the wan blank sky is all revealed again with livid horizon around the heaving of the iron-gray sea.

. . . Thou dim and lofty heaven of the North — gray sky of Odin — bitter thy winds and spectral all thy colors! — they that dwell beneath thee know not the glory of Eternal Summer's green — the azure splendor of Southern day! — but thine are the lightnings of Thought illuminating for human eyes the interspaces between sun and sun. Thine the generations of might — the strivers, the battlers — the men who make Nature tame! — thine the domain of inspiration and achievement — the larger heroisms, the vaster labors that endure, the higher knowledge, and all the witchcrafts of science! . . .

But in each one of us there lives a mysterious Something which is Self, yet also infinitely more than Self — incomprehensibly multiple — the complex total of sensations, impulses, timidities belonging to the unknown past. And the lips of the little stranger from the tropics have become all white,

because that Something within her — ghostly bequest from generations who loved the light and rest and wondrous color of a more radiant world — now shrinks all back about her girl's heart with fear of this pale grim North. . . . And lo! — opening mile-wide in dream-gray majesty before us — reaching away, through measureless mazes of masting, into remotenesses all vapor-veiled — the mighty perspective of New York harbor! . . .

Thou knowest it not, this gloom about us, little maiden; — 't is only a magical dusk we are entering — only that mystic dimness in which miracles must be wrought! . . . See the marvelous shapes uprising — the immensities, the astonishments! And other greater wonders thou wilt behold in a little while, when we shall have become lost to each other forever in the surging of the City's million-hearted life! . . . 'T is all shadow here, thou sayest? — Aye, 't is twilight, verily, by contrast with that glory out of which thou camest, Lys — twilight only — but the Twilight of the Gods! . . . Adié, chè — Bon-Dié ké béni ou! . . .

CHITA

A MEMORY OF LAST ISLAND

But Nature whistled with all her winds,
Did as she pleased, and went her way.

EMERSON

Je suis la vaste mêlée —
Reptile, étant l'onde; ailée,
    Étant le vent —
Force et fuite, haine et vie,
Houle immense, poursuivie
    Et poursuivant.

VICTOR HUGO

CHITA

PART I

THE LEGEND OF L'ÎLE DERNIÈRE

I

TRAVELING south from New Orleans to the Islands, you pass through a strange land into a strange sea, by various winding waterways. You can journey to the Gulf by lugger if you please; but the trip may be made much more rapidly and agreeably on some one of those light, narrow steamers, built especially for bayou-travel, which usually receive passengers at a point not far from the foot of old Saint Louis Street, hard by the sugar-landing, where there is ever a pushing and flocking of steam-craft — all striving for place to rest their white breasts against the levée, side by side — like great weary swans. But the miniature steamboat on which you engage passage to the Gulf never lingers long in the Mississippi: she crosses the river, slips into some canal-mouth, labors along the artificial channel awhile, and then leaves it with a scream of joy, to puff her free way down many a league of heavily shadowed bayou. Perhaps thereafter she may bear you through the immense silence of drenched rice-fields,

where the yellow-green level is broken at long intervals by the black silhouette of some irrigating machine; — but, whichever of the five different routes be pursued, you will find yourself more than once floating through sombre mazes of swamp-forest — past assemblages of cypresses all hoary with the parasitic tillandsia, and grotesque as gatherings of fetich-gods. Ever from river or from lakelet the steamer glides again into canal or bayou — from bayou or canal once more into lake or bay; and sometimes the swamp-forest visibly thins away from these shores into wastes of reedy morass where, even of breathless nights, the quaggy soil trembles to a sound like thunder of breakers on a coast: the storm-roar of billions of reptile voices chanting in cadence — rhythmically surging in stupendous crescendo and diminuendo — a monstrous and appalling chorus of frogs! . . .

Panting, screaming, scraping her bottom over the sand-bars — all day the little steamer strives to reach the grand blaze of blue open water below the marsh-lands; and perhaps she may be fortunate enough to enter the Gulf about the time of sunset. For the sake of passengers, she travels by day only; but there are other vessels which make the journey also by night — threading the bayou-labyrinths winter and summer: sometimes steering by the North Star — sometimes feeling the way with poles in the white season of fogs — sometimes, again, steering by that Star of Evening which in our sky

glows like another moon, and drops over the silent lakes as she passes a quivering trail of silver fire.

Shadows lengthen; and at last the woods dwindle away behind you into thin bluish lines; — land and water alike take more luminous color; — bayous open into broad passes; — lakes link themselves with sea-bays; — and the ocean-wind bursts upon you — keen, cool, and full of light. For the first time the vessel begins to swing — rocking to the great living pulse of the tides. And gazing from the deck around you, with no forest walls to break the view, it will seem to you that the low land must have once been rent asunder by the sea, and strewn about the Gulf in fantastic tatters. . . .

Sometimes above a waste of wind-blown prairie-cane you see an oasis emerging — a ridge or hillock heavily umbraged with the rounded foliage of evergreen oaks: — a chénière. And from the shining flood also kindred green knolls arise — pretty islets, each with its beach-girdle of dazzling sand and shells, yellow-white — and all radiant with semi-tropical foliage, myrtle and palmetto, orange and magnolia. Under their emerald shadows curious little villages of palmetto huts are drowsing, where dwell a swarthy population of Orientals — Malay fishermen, who speak the Spanish-Creole of the Philippines as well as their own Tagal, and perpetuate in Louisiana the Catholic traditions of the Indies. There are girls in those unfamiliar villages worthy to inspire any statuary — beautiful with the beauty of ruddy

bronze — gracile as the palmettoes that sway above them. . . . Farther seaward you may also pass a Chinese settlement: some queer camp of wooden dwellings clustering around a vast platform that stands above the water upon a thousand piles; — over the miniature wharf you can scarcely fail to observe a white sign-board painted with crimson ideographs. The great platform is used for drying fish in the sun; and the fantastic characters of the sign, literally translated, mean: "Heap — Shrimp — Plenty." . . . And finally all the land melts down into desolations of sea-marsh, whose stillness is seldom broken, except by the melancholy cry of long-legged birds, and in wild seasons by that sound which shakes all shores when the weird Musician of the Sea touches the bass keys of his mighty organ. . . .

II

Beyond the sea-marshes a curious archipelago lies. If you travel by steamer to the sea-islands to-day, you are tolerably certain to enter the Gulf by Grande Pass — skirting Grande Terre, the most familiar island of all, not so much because of its proximity as because of its great crumbling fort and its graceful pharos: the stationary White-Light of Barataria. Otherwise the place is bleakly uninteresting: a wilderness of wind-swept grasses and sinewy weeds waving away from a thin beach ever speckled with drift and decaying things — worm-riddled timbers, dead porpoises. Eastward the russet level is broken

by the columnar silhouette of the lighthouse, and again, beyond it, by some puny scrub timber, above which rises the angular ruddy mass of the old brick fort, whose ditches swarm with crabs, and whose sluiceways are half choked by obsolete cannon-shot, now thickly covered with incrustation of oyster shells. . . . Around all the gray circling of a shark-haunted sea. . . .

Sometimes of autumn evenings there, when the hollow of heaven flames like the interior of a chalice, and waves and clouds are flying in one wild rout of broken gold — you may see the tawny grasses all covered with something like husks — wheat-colored husks — large, flat, and disposed evenly along the lee-side of each swaying stalk, so as to present only their edges to the wind. But, if you approach, those pale husks all break open to display strange splendors of scarlet and seal-brown, with arabesque mottlings in white and black: they change into wondrous living blossoms, which detach themselves before your eyes and rise in air, and flutter away by thousands to settle down farther off, and turn into wheat-colored husks once more . . . a whirling flower-drift of sleepy butterflies!

Southwest, across the pass, gleams beautiful Grande Isle: primitively a wilderness of palmetto (latanier); — then drained, diked, and cultivated by Spanish sugar-planters; and now familiar chiefly as a bathing-resort. Since the war the ocean re-

claimed its own; — the cane-fields have degenerated into sandy plains, over which tramways wind to the smooth beach; — the plantation-residences have been converted into rustic hotels, and the negro-quarters remodeled into villages of cozy cottages for the reception of guests. But with its imposing groves of oak, its golden wealth of orange-trees, its odorous lanes of oleander, its broad grazing-meadows yellow-starred with wild camomile, Grande Isle remains the prettiest island of the Gulf; and its loveliness is exceptional. For the bleakness of Grande Terre is reiterated by most of the other islands — Caillou, Cassetête, Calumet, Wine Island, the twin Timbaliers, Gull Island, and the many islets haunted by the gray pelican — all of which are little more than sand-bars covered with wiry grasses, prairie-cane, and scrub timber. Last Island (L'Île Dernière) — well worthy a long visit in other years, in spite of its remoteness, is now a ghastly desolation twenty-five miles long. Lying nearly forty miles west of Grande Isle, it was nevertheless far more populated a generation ago: it was not only the most celebrated island of the group, but also the most fashionable watering-place of the aristocratic South; — to-day it is visited by fishermen only, at long intervals. Its admirable beach in many respects resembled that of Grande Isle to-day; the accommodations also were much similar, although finer: a charming village of cottages facing the Gulf near the western end. The hotel itself was a massive two-

Grand Isle

From a photograph taken before the hurricane of 1893. *On the left is the cottage occupied by Hearn when he wrote "Chita."*

[illegible]

story construction of timber, containing many apartments, together with a large dining-room and dancing-hall. In rear of the hotel was a bayou, where passengers landed — "Village Bayou" it is still called by seamen; — but the deep channel which now cuts the island in two a little eastwardly did not exist while the village remained. The sea tore it out in one night — the same night when trees, fields, dwellings, all vanished into the Gulf, leaving no vestige of former human habitation except a few of those strong brick props and foundations upon which the frame houses and cisterns had been raised. One living creature was found there after the cataclysm — a cow! But how that solitary cow survived the fury of a storm-flood that actually rent the island in twain has ever remained a mystery. . . .

III

On the Gulf side of these islands you may observe that the trees — when there are any trees — all bend away from the sea; and, even of bright, hot days when the wind sleeps, there is something grotesquely pathetic in their look of agonized terror. A group of oaks at Grande Isle I remember as especially suggestive: five stooping silhouettes in line against the horizon, like fleeing women with streaming garments and wind-blown hair — bowing grievously and thrusting out arms desperately northward as to save themselves from falling. And they are being pursued indeed; — for the sea is devouring the

land. Many and many a mile of ground has yielded to the tireless charging of Ocean's cavalry: far out you can see, through a good glass, the porpoises at play where of old the sugar-cane shook out its million bannerets; and shark-fins now seam deep water above a site where pigeons used to coo. Men build dikes; but the besieging tides bring up their battering-rams — whole forests of drift — huge trunks of water-oak and weighty cypress. Forever the yellow Mississippi strives to build; forever the sea struggles to destroy; — and amid their eternal strife the islands and the promontories change shape, more slowly, but not less fantastically, than the clouds of heaven.

And worthy of study are those wan battle-grounds where the woods made their last brave stand against the irresistible invasion — usually at some long point of sea-marsh, widely fringed with billowing sand. Just where the waves curl beyond such a point you may discern a multitude of blackened, snaggy shapes protruding above the water — some high enough to resemble ruined chimneys, others bearing a startling likeness to enormous skeleton-feet and skeleton-hands — with crustaceous white growths clinging to them here and there like remnants of integument. These are bodies and limbs of drowned oaks — so long drowned that the shell-scurf is inch-thick upon parts of them. Farther in upon the beach immense trunks lie overthrown. Some look like vast broken columns; some suggest

colossal torsos embedded, and seem to reach out mutilated stumps in despair from their deepening graves; — and beside these are others which have kept their feet with astounding obstinacy, although the barbarian tides have been charging them for twenty years, and gradually torn away the soil above and beneath their roots. The sand around — soft beneath and thinly crusted upon the surface — is everywhere pierced with holes made by a beautifully mottled and semi-diaphanous crab, with hairy legs, big staring eyes, and milk-white claws; — while in the green sedges beyond there is a perpetual rustling, as of some strong wind beating among reeds: a marvelous creeping of "fiddlers," which the inexperienced visitor might at first mistake for so many peculiar beetles, as they run about sideways, each with his huge single claw folded upon his body like a wing-case. Year by year that rustling strip of green land grows narrower; the sand spreads and sinks, shuddering and wrinkling like a living brown skin; and the last standing corpses of the oaks, ever clinging with naked, dead feet to the sliding beach, lean more and more out of the perpendicular. As the sands subside, the stumps appear to creep; their intertwisted masses of snakish roots seem to crawl, to writhe — like the reaching arms of cephalopods. . . .

. . . Grande Terre is going: the sea mines her fort, and will before many years carry the ramparts by storm. Grande Isle is going — slowly but surely: the

Gulf has eaten three miles into her meadowed land. Last Island has gone! How it went I first heard from the lips of a veteran pilot, while we sat one evening together on the trunk of a drifted cypress which some high tide had pressed deeply into the Grande Isle beach. The day had been tropically warm; we had sought the shore for a breath of living air. Sunset came, and with it the ponderous heat lifted — a sudden breeze blew — lightnings flickered in the darkening horizon — wind and water began to strive together — and soon all the low coast boomed. Then my companion began his story; perhaps the coming of the storm inspired him to speak! And as I listened to him, listening also to the clamoring of the coast, there flashed back to me recollection of a singular Breton fancy: that the Voice of the Sea is never one voice, but a tumult of many voices — voices of drowned men — the muttering of multitudinous dead — the moaning of innumerable ghosts, all rising, to rage against the living, at the great Witch-call of storms. . . .

IV

THE charm of a single summer day on these island shores is something impossible to express, never to be forgotten. Rarely, in the paler zones, do earth and heaven take such luminosity: those will best understand me who have seen the splendor of a West Indian sky. And yet there is a tenderness of tint, a caress of color, in these Gulf days which is not of the

Antilles — a spirituality, as of eternal tropical spring. It must have been to even such a sky that Xenophanes lifted up his eyes of old when he vowed the Infinite Blue was God; — it was indeed under such a sky that De Soto named the vastest and grandest of Southern havens Espiritu Santo — the Bay of the Holy Ghost. There is a something unutterable in this bright Gulf-air that compels awe — something vital, something holy, something pantheistic: and reverentially the mind asks itself if what the eye beholds is not the Πνεύμα indeed, the Infinite Breath, the Divine Ghost, the great Blue Soul of the Unknown. All, all is blue in the calm — save the low land under your feet, which you almost forget, since it seems only as a tiny green flake afloat in the liquid eternity of day. Then slowly, caressingly, irresistibly, the witchery of the Infinite grows upon you: out of Time and Space you begin to dream with open eyes — to drift into delicious oblivion of facts — to forget the past, the present, the substantial — to comprehend nothing but the existence of that infinite Blue Ghost as something into which you would wish to melt utterly away forever. . . .

And this day-magic of azure endures sometimes for months together. Cloudlessly the dawn reddens up through a violet east: there is no speck upon the blossoming of its Mystical Rose — unless it be the silhouette of some passing gull, whirling his sickle-wings against the crimsoning. Ever, as the sun

floats higher, the flood shifts its color. Sometimes smooth and gray, yet flickering with the morning gold, it is the vision of John — the apocalyptic Sea of Glass mixed with fire; — again, with the growing breeze, it takes that incredible purple tint familiar mostly to painters of West Indian scenery; — once more, under the blaze of noon, it changes to a waste of broken emerald. With evening, the horizon assumes tints of inexpressible sweetness — pearl-lights, opaline colors of milk and fire; and in the west are topaz-glowings and wondrous flushings as of nacre. Then, if the sea sleeps, it dreams of all these — faintly, weirdly — shadowing them even to the verge of heaven.

Beautiful, too, are those white phantasmagoria which, at the approach of equinoctial days, mark the coming of the winds. Over the rim of the sea a bright cloud gently pushes up its head. It rises; and others rise with it, to right and left — slowly at first; then more swiftly. All are brilliantly white and flocculent, like loose new cotton. Gradually they mount in enormous line high above the Gulf, rolling and wreathing into an arch that expands and advances — bending from horizon to horizon. A clear, cold breath accompanies its coming. Reaching the zenith, it seems there to hang poised awhile — a ghostly bridge arching the empyrean — upreaching its measureless span from either underside of the world. Then the colossal phantom begins to turn, as on a pivot of air — always preserving its curvilinear

symmetry, but moving its unseen ends beyond and below the sky-circle. And at last it floats away unbroken beyond the blue sweep of the world, with a wind following after. Day after day, almost at the same hour, the white arc rises, wheels, and passes. . . .

. . . Never a glimpse of rock on these low shores; — only long sloping beaches and bars of smooth tawny sand. Sand and sea teem with vitality; — over all the dunes there is a constant susurration, a blattering and swarming of crustacea; — through all the sea there is a ceaseless play of silver lightning — flashing of myriad fish. Sometimes the shallows are thickened with minute, transparent, crab-like organisms — all colorless as gelatine. There are days also when countless medusæ drift in — beautiful veined creatures that throb like hearts, with perpetual systole and diastole of their diaphanous envelops: some, of translucent azure or rose, seem in the flood the shadows or ghosts of huge campanulate flowers; — others have the semblance of strange living vegetables — great milky tubers, just beginning to sprout. But woe to the human skin grazed by those shadowy sproutings and spectral stamens! — the touch of glowing iron is not more painful. . . . Within an hour or two after their appearance all these tremulous jellies vanish mysteriously as they came.

Perhaps, if a bold swimmer, you may venture out alone a long way — once! Not twice! — even in company. As the water deepens beneath you, and

you feel those ascending wave-currents of coldness arising which bespeak profundity, you will also begin to feel innumerable touches, as of groping fingers — touches of the bodies of fish, innumerable fish, fleeing toward shore. The farther you advance, the more thickly you will feel them come; and above you and around you, to right and left, others will leap and fall so swiftly as to daze the sight, like intercrossing fountain-jets of fluid silver. The gulls fly lower about you, circling with sinister squeaking cries; — perhaps for an instant your feet touch in the deep something heavy, swift, lithe, that rushes past with a swirling shock. Then the fear of the Abyss, the vast and voiceless Nightmare of the Sea, will come upon you; the silent panic of all those opaline millions that flee glimmering by will enter into you also. . . .

From what do they flee thus perpetually? Is it from the giant sawfish or the ravening shark? — from the herds of the porpoises, or from the grande-écaille — that splendid monster whom no net may hold — all helmed and armored in argent plate-mail? — or from the hideous devil-fish of the Gulf — gigantic, flat-bodied, black, with immense side-fins ever outspread like the pinions of a bat — the terror of luggermen, the uprooter of anchors? From all these, perhaps, and from other monsters likewise — goblin shapes evolved by Nature as destroyers, as equilibrists, as counterchecks to that prodigious fecundity, which, unhindered, would thicken the deep into one measureless and waveless ferment of

being. . . . But when there are many bathers these perils are forgotten — numbers give courage — one can abandon one's self, without fear of the invisible, to the long, quivering, electrical caresses of the sea. . . .

V

THIRTY years ago, Last Island lay steeped in the enormous light of even such magical days. July was dying; — for weeks no fleck of cloud had broken the heaven's blue dream of eternity; winds held their breath; slow wavelets caressed the bland brown beach with a sound as of kisses and whispers. To one who found himself alone, beyond the limits of the village and beyond the hearing of its voices — the vast silence, the vast light, seemed full of weirdness. And these hushes, these transparencies, do not always inspire a causeless apprehension: they are omens sometimes — omens of coming tempest. Nature — incomprehensible Sphinx! — before her mightiest bursts of rage, ever puts forth her divinest witchery, makes more manifest her awful beauty. . . .

But in that forgotten summer the witchery lasted many long days — days born in rose-light, buried in gold. It was the height of the season. The long myrtle-shadowed village was thronged with its summer population; — the big hotel could hardly accommodate all its guests; — the bathing-houses were too few for the crowds who flocked to the water morning and evening. There were diversions for all

— hunting and fishing parties, yachting excursions, rides, music, games, promenades. Carriage wheels whirled flickering along the beach, seaming its smoothness noiselessly, as if muffled. Love wrote its dreams upon the sand. . . .

. . . Then one great noon, when the blue abyss of day seemed to yawn over the world more deeply than ever before, a sudden change touched the quicksilver smoothness of the waters — the swaying shadow of a vast motion. First the whole sea-circle appeared to rise up bodily at the sky; the horizon-curve lifted to a straight line; the line darkened and approached — a monstrous wrinkle, an immeasurable fold of green water, moving swift as a cloud-shadow pursued by sunlight. But it had looked formidable only by startling contrast with the previous placidity of the open: it was scarcely two feet high; — it curled slowly as it neared the beach, and combed itself out in sheets of woolly foam with a low, rich roll of whispered thunder. Swift in pursuit another followed — a third — a feebler fourth; then the sea only swayed a little, and stilled again. Minutes passed, and the immeasurable heaving recommenced — one, two, three, four . . . seven long swells this time; — and the Gulf smoothed itself once more. Irregularly the phenomenon continued to repeat itself, each time with heavier billowing and briefer intervals of quiet — until at last the whole sea grew restless and shifted color and flickered green; — the swells became shorter and

changed form. Then from horizon to shore ran one uninterrupted heaving — one vast green swarming of snaky shapes, rolling in to hiss and flatten upon the sand. Yet no single cirrus-speck revealed itself through all the violet heights: there was no wind! — you might have fancied the sea had been upheaved from beneath. . . .

And indeed the fancy of a seismic origin for a windless surge would not appear in these latitudes to be utterly without foundation. On the fairest days a southeast breeze may bear you an odor singular enough to startle you from sleep — a strong, sharp smell as of fish-oil; and gazing at the sea you might be still more startled at the sudden apparition of great oleaginous patches spreading over the water, sheeting over the swells. That is, if you had never heard of the mysterious submarine oil-wells, the volcanic fountains, unexplored, that well up with the eternal pulsing of the Gulf Stream. . . .

But the pleasure-seekers of Last Island knew there must have been a "great blow" somewhere that day. Still the sea swelled; and a splendid surf made the evening bath delightful. Then, just at sundown, a beautiful cloud-bridge grew up and arched the sky with a single span of cottony pink vapor, that changed and deepened color with the dying of the iridescent day. And the cloud-bridge approached, stretched, strained, and swung round at last to make way for the coming of the gale — even as the light bridges that traverse the dreamy

Têche swing open when luggermen sound through their conch-shells the long, bellowing signal of approach.

Then the wind began to blow, with the passing of July. It blew from the northeast, clear, cool. It blew in enormous sighs, dying away at regular intervals, as if pausing to draw breath. All night it blew; and in each pause could be heard the answering moan of the rising surf — as if the rhythm of the sea moulded itself after the rhythm of the air — as if the waving of the water responded precisely to the waving of the wind — a billow for every puff, a surge for every sigh.

The August morning broke in a bright sky; — the breeze still came cool and clear from the northeast. The waves were running now at a sharp angle to the shore: they began to carry fleeces, an innumerable flock of vague green shapes, wind-driven to be despoiled of their ghostly wool. Far as the eye could follow the line of the beach, all the slope was white with the great shearing of them. Clouds came, flew as in a panic against the face of the sun, and passed. All that day and through the night and into the morning again the breeze continued from the northeast, blowing like an equinoctial gale. . . .

Then day by day the vast breath freshened steadily, and the waters heightened. A week later sea-bathing had become perilous: colossal breakers were herding in, like moving leviathan-backs, twice the height of a man. Still the gale grew, and the

billowing waxed mightier, and faster and faster overhead flew the tatters of torn cloud. The gray morning of the 9th wanly lighted a surf that appalled the best swimmers: the sea was one wild agony of foam, the gale was rending off the heads of the waves and veiling the horizon with a fog of salt spray. Shadowless and gray the day remained; there were mad bursts of lashing rain. Evening brought with it a sinister apparition, looming through a cloud-rent in the west — a scarlet sun in a green sky. His sanguine disk, enormously magnified, seemed barred like the body of a belted planet. A moment, and the crimson spectre vanished; and the moonless night came.

Then the Wind grew weird. It ceased being a breath; it became a Voice moaning across the world — hooting — uttering nightmare sounds — *Whoo!* — *whoo!* — *whoo!* — and with each stupendous owl-cry the mooing of the waters seemed to deepen, more and more abysmally, through all the hours of darkness. From the northwest the breakers of the bay began to roll high over the sandy slope, into the salines; — the village bayou broadened to a bellowing flood. . . . So the tumult swelled and the turmoil heightened until morning — a morning of gray gloom and whistling rain. Rain of bursting clouds and rain of wind-blown brine from the great spuming agony of the sea.

The steamer Star was due from Saint Mary's that fearful morning. Could she come? No one really

believed it — no one. And nevertheless men struggled to the roaring beach to look for her, because hope is stronger than reason. . . .

Even to-day, in these Creole islands, the advent of the steamer is the great event of the week. There are no telegraph lines, no telephones: the mail-packet is the only trustworthy medium of communication with the outer world, bringing friends, news, letters. The magic of steam has placed New Orleans nearer to New York than to the Timbaliers, nearer to Washington than to Wine Island, nearer to Chicago than to Barataria Bay. And even during the deepest sleep of waves and winds there will come betimes to sojourners in this unfamiliar archipelago a feeling of lonesomeness that is a fear, a feeling of isolation from the world of men — totally unlike that sense of solitude which haunts one in the silence of mountain-heights, or amid the eternal tumult of lofty granitic coasts: a sense of helpless insecurity. The land seems but an undulation of the sea-bed: its highest ridges do not rise more than the height of a man above the salines on either side; — the salines themselves lie almost level with the level of the flood-tides; — the tides are variable, treacherous, mysterious. But when all around and above these ever-changing shores the twin vastnesses of heaven and sea begin to utter the tremendous revelation of themselves as infinite forces in contention, then indeed this sense of separation from humanity appals. . . . Perhaps it was such a feeling which

forced men, on the tenth day of August, eighteen hundred and fifty-six, to hope against hope for the coming of the Star, and to strain their eyes towards far-off Terrebonne. "It was a wind you could lie down on," said my friend the pilot.

. . . "Great God!" shrieked a voice above the shouting of the storm — "*she is coming!*" . . . It was true. Down the Atchafalaya, and thence through strange mazes of bayou, lakelet, and pass, by a rear route familiar only to the best of pilots, the frail river-craft had toiled into Caillou Bay, running close to the main shore; — and now she was heading right for the island, with the wind aft, over the monstrous sea. On she came, swaying, rocking, plunging — with a great whiteness wrapping her about like a cloud, and moving with her moving — a tempest-whirl of spray; — ghost-white and like a ghost she came, for her smokestacks exhaled no visible smoke — the wind devoured it! The excitement on shore became wild; — men shouted themselves hoarse; women laughed and cried. Every telescope and opera-glass was directed upon the coming apparition; all wondered how the pilot kept his feet; all marveled at the madness of the captain.

But Captain Abraham Smith was not mad. A veteran American sailor, he had learned to know the great Gulf as scholars know deep books by heart: he knew the birthplace of its tempests, the mystery of its tides, the omens of its hurricanes. While lying at Brashear City he felt the storm had not yet

reached its highest, vaguely foresaw a mighty peril, and resolved to wait no longer for a lull. "Boys," he said, "we've got to take her out in spite of Hell!" And they "took her out." Through all the peril, his men stayed by him and obeyed him. By mid-morning the wind had deepened to a roar — lowering sometimes to a rumble, sometimes bursting upon the ears like a measureless and deafening crash. Then the captain knew the Star was running a race with Death. "She'll win it," he muttered; — "she'll stand it. . . . Perhaps they'll have need of me tonight."

She won! With a sonorous steam-chant of triumph the brave little vessel rode at last into the bayou, and anchored hard by her accustomed resting-place, in full view of the hotel, though not near enough to shore to lower her gang-plank. . . . But she had sung her swan-song. Gathering in from the northeast, the waters of the bay were already marbling over the salines and half across the island; and still the wind increased its paroxysmal power.

Cottages began to rock. Some slid away from the solid props upon which they rested. A chimney tumbled. Shutters were wrenched off; verandas demolished. Light roofs lifted, dropped again, and flapped into ruin. Trees bent their heads to the earth. And still the storm grew louder and blacker with every passing hour.

The Star rose with the rising of the waters,

dragging her anchor. Two more anchors were put out, and still she dragged — dragged in with the flood — twisting, shuddering, careening in her agony. Evening fell; the sand began to move with the wind, stinging faces like a continuous fire of fine shot; and frenzied blasts came to buffet the steamer forward, sideward. Then one of her hog-chains parted with a clang like the boom of a big bell. Then another! . . . Then the captain bade his men to cut away all her upper works, clean to the deck. Overboard into the seething went her stacks, her pilot-house, her cabins — and whirled away. And the naked hull of the Star, still dragging her three anchors, labored on through the darkness, nearer and nearer to the immense silhouette of the hotel, whose hundred windows were now all aflame. The vast timber building seemed to defy the storm. The wind, roaring round its broad verandas — hissing through every crevice with the sound and force of steam — appeared to waste its rage. And in the half-lull between two terrible gusts there came to the captain's ears a sound that seemed strange in that night of multitudinous terrors . . . a sound of music!

VI

. . . Almost every evening throughout the season there had been dancing in the great hall; — there was dancing that night also. The population of the hotel had been augmented by the advent of families

from other parts of the island, who found their summer cottages insecure places of shelter: there were nearly four hundred guests assembled. Perhaps it was for this reason that the entertainment had been prepared upon a grander plan than usual, that it assumed the form of a fashionable ball. And all those pleasure-seekers — representing the wealth and beauty of the Creole parishes — whether from Ascension or Assumption, Saint Mary's or Saint Landry's, Iberville or Terrebonne, whether inhabitants of the multi-colored and many-balconied Creole quarter of the quaint metropolis, or dwellers in the dreamy paradises of the Têche — mingled joyously, knowing each other, feeling in some sort akin — whether affiliated by blood, connaturalized by caste, or simply interassociated by traditional sympathies of class sentiment and class interest. Perhaps in the more than ordinary merriment of that evening something of nervous exaltation might have been discerned — something like a feverish resolve to oppose apprehension with gayety, to combat uneasiness by diversion. But the hours passed in mirthfulness; the first general feeling of depression began to weigh less and less upon the guests; they had found reason to confide in the solidity of the massive building; there were no positive terrors, no outspoken fears; and the new conviction of all had found expression in the words of the host himself — "Il n'y a rien de mieux à faire que de s'amuser!" Of what avail to lament the

prospective devastation of cane-fields — to discuss the possible ruin of crops? Better to seek solace in choregraphic harmonies, in the rhythm of gracious motion and of perfect melody, than hearken to the discords of the wild orchestra of storms; — wiser to admire the grace of Parisian toilets, the eddy of trailing robes with its fairy-foam of lace, the ivorine loveliness of glossy shoulders and jeweled throats, the glimmering of satin-slippered feet — than to watch the raging of the flood without, or the flying of the wrack. . . .

So the music and the mirth went on: they made joy for themselves — those elegant guests; — they jested and sipped rich wines; — they pledged, and hoped, and loved, and promised, with never a thought of the morrow, on the night of the tenth of August, eighteen hundred and fifty-six. Observant parents were there, planning for the future bliss of their nearest and dearest; — mothers and fathers of handsome lads, lithe and elegant as young pines, and fresh from the polish of foreign university training; — mothers and fathers of splendid girls whose simplest attitudes were witcheries. Young cheeks flushed, young hearts fluttered with an emotion more puissant than the excitement of the dance; — young eyes betrayed the happy secret discreeter lips would have preserved. Slave-servants circled through the aristocratic press, bearing dainties and wines, praying permission to pass in terms at once humble and officious — always in the excellent

French which well-trained house-servants were taught to use on such occasions.

. . . Night wore on: still the shining floor palpitated to the feet of the dancers; still the piano-forte pealed, and still the violins sang — and the sound of their singing shrilled through the darkness, in gasps of the gale, to the ears of Captain Smith, as he strove to keep his footing on the spray-drenched deck of the Star.

"Christ!" he muttered — "a dance! If that wind whips round south, there'll be another dance! . . . But I guess the Star will stay." . . .

Half an hour might have passed; still the lights flamed calmly, and the violins trilled, and the perfumed whirl went on. . . . And suddenly the wind veered!

Again the Star reeled, and shuddered, and turned, and began to drag all her anchors. But she now dragged away from the great building and its lights — away from the voluptuous thunder of the grand piano — even at that moment outpouring the great joy of Weber's melody orchestrated by Berlioz: "l'Invitation à la Valse" — with its marvelous musical swing!

"Waltzing!" cried the captain. "God help them! — God help us all now! . . . *The Wind waltzes tonight, with the Sea for his partner!*" . . .

O the stupendous Valse-Tourbillon! O the mighty Dancer! One — two — three! From northeast to

east, from east to southeast, from southeast to south: then from the south he came, whirling the Sea in his arms. . .

. . . Some one shrieked in the midst of the revels; — some girl who found her pretty slippers wet. What could it be? Thin streams of water were spreading over the level planking — curling about the feet of the dancers. . . . What could it be? All the land had begun to quake, even as, but a moment before, the polished floor was trembling to the pressure of circling steps; — all the building shook now; every beam uttered its groan. What could it be? . . .

There was a clamor, a panic, a rush to the windy night. Infinite darkness above and beyond; but the lantern-beams danced far out over an unbroken circle of heaving and swirling black water. Stealthily, swiftly, the measureless sea-flood was rising.

"Messieurs — mesdames, ce n'est rien. Nothing serious, ladies, I assure you. . . . Mais nous en avons vu bien souvent, les inondations comme celle-ci; ça passe vite! The water will go down in a few hours, ladies; — it never rises higher than this; il n'y a pas le moindre danger, je vous dis! Allons! il n'y a — My God! what is that?" . . .

For a moment there was a ghastly hush of voices. And through that hush there burst upon the ears of all a fearful and unfamiliar sound, as of a colossal cannonade — rolling up from the south, with volleying lightnings. Vastly and swiftly, nearer and

nearer it came — a ponderous and unbroken thunder roll, terrible as the long muttering of an earthquake.

The nearest mainland — across mad Caillou Bay to the sea-marshes — lay twelve miles north; west, by the Gulf, the nearest solid ground was twenty miles distant. There were boats, yes! — but the stoutest swimmer might never reach them now! . .

Then rose a frightful cry — the hoarse, hideous, indescribable cry of hopeless fear — the despairing animal-cry man utters when suddenly brought face to face with Nothingness, without preparation, without consolation, without possibility of respite. . . . Sauve qui peut! Some wrenched down the doors; some clung to the heavy banquet-tables, to the sofas, to the billiard-tables: — during one terrible instant — against fruitless heroisms, against futile generosities — raged all the frenzy of selfishness, all the brutalities of panic. And then — then came, thundering through the blackness, the giant swells, boom on boom! . . . One crash! — the huge frame building rocks like a cradle, seesaws, crackles. What are human shrieks now? — the tornado is shrieking! Another! — chandeliers splinter; lights are dashed out; a sweeping cataract hurls in: the immense hall rises — oscillates — twirls as upon a pivot — crepitates — crumbles into ruin. Crash again! — the swirling wreck dissolves into the wallowing of another monster billow; and a hundred cottages over-

turn, spin in sudden eddies, quiver, disjoint, and melt into the seething.

. . . So the hurricane passed — tearing off the heads of the prodigious waves, to hurl them a hundred feet in air — heaping up the ocean against the land — upturning the woods. Bays and passes were swollen to abysses; rivers regorged; the sea-marshes were changed to raging wastes of water. Before New Orleans the flood of the mile-broad Mississippi rose six feet above highest water-mark. One hundred and ten miles away, Donaldsonville trembled at the towering tide of the Lafourche. Lakes strove to the burst their boundaries. Far-off river steamers tugged wildly at their cables — shivering like tethered creatures that hear by night the approaching howl of destroyers. Smokestacks were hurled overboard, pilot-houses torn away, cabins blown to fragments.

And over roaring Kaimbuck Pass — over the agony of Caillou Bay — the billowing tide rushed unresisted from the Gulf — tearing and swallowing the land in its course — ploughing out deep-sea channels where sleek herds had been grazing but a few hours before — rending islands in twain — and ever bearing with it, through the night, enormous vortex of wreck and vast wan drift of corpses. . . .

But the Star remained. And Captain Abraham Smith, with a long, good rope about his waist, dashed again and again into that awful surging to

snatch victims from death — clutching at passing hands, heads, garments, in the cataract-sweep of the seas — saving, aiding, cheering, though blinded by spray and battered by drifting wreck, until his strength failed in the unequal struggle at last, and his men drew him aboard senseless, with some beautiful half-drowned girl safe in his arms. But well-nigh twoscore souls had been rescued by him; and the Star stayed on through it all.

Long years after, the weed-grown ribs of her graceful skeleton could still be seen, curving up from the sand-dunes of Last Island, in valiant witness of how well she stayed.

VII

DAY breaks through the flying wrack, over the infinite heaving of the sea, over the low land made vast with desolation. It is a spectral dawn: a wan light, like the light of a dying sun.

The wind has waned and veered; the flood sinks slowly back to its abysses — abandoning its plunder — scattering its piteous waifs over bar and dune, over shoal and marsh, among the silences of the mango-swamps, over the long low reaches of sand-grasses and drowned weeds, for more than a hundred miles. From the shell-reefs of Pointe-au-Fer to the shallows of Pelto Bay the dead lie mingled with the high-heaped drift; — from their cypress groves the vultures rise to dispute a share of the feast with the shrieking frigate-birds and squeaking gulls.

And as the tremendous tide withdraws its plunging waters, all the pirates of air follow the great white-gleaming retreat: a storm of billowing wings and screaming throats.

And swift in the wake of gull and frigate-bird the Wreckers come, the Spoilers of the dead — savage skimmers of the sea — hurricane-riders wont to spread their canvas-pinions in the face of storms; Sicilian and Corsican outlaws, Manila-men from the marshes, deserters from many navies, Lascars, marooners, refugees of a hundred nationalities — fishers and shrimpers by name, smugglers by opportunity — wild channel-finders from obscure bayous and unfamiliar chénières, all skilled in the mysteries of these mysterious waters beyond the comprehension of the oldest licensed pilot. . . .

There is plunder for all — birds and men. There are drowned sheep in multitude, heaped carcasses of kine. There are casks of claret and kegs of brandy and legions of bottles bobbing in the surf. There are billiard-tables overturned upon the sand; — there are sofas, pianos, footstools and music-stools, luxurious chairs, lounges of bamboo. There are chests of cedar, and toilet-tables of rosewood, and trunks of fine stamped leather stored with precious apparel. There are objets de luxe innumerable. There are children's playthings: French dolls in marvelous toilets, and toy carts, and wooden horses, and wooden spades, and brave little wooden ships that rode out the gale in which the great Nautilus

went down. There is money in notes and in coin — in purses, in pocketbooks, and in pockets: plenty of it! There are silks, satins, laces, and fine linen to be stripped from the bodies of the drowned — and necklaces, bracelets, watches, finger-rings and fine chains, brooches and trinkets. . . . "Chi bidizza! — Oh! chi bedda mughieri! Eccu, la bidizza!" That ball-dress was made in Paris by — But you never heard of him, Sicilian Vicenzu. . . . "Che bella sposina!" Her betrothal ring will not come off, Giuseppe; but the delicate bone snaps easily: your oyster-knife can sever the tendon. . . . "Guardate! chi bedda picciota!" Over her heart you will find it, Valentino — the locket held by that fine Swiss chain of woven hair — "Caya manan!" And it is not your quadroon bondsmaid, sweet lady, who now disrobes you so roughly; those Malay hands are less deft than hers — but she slumbers very far away from you, and may not be aroused from her sleep. "Na quita mo! dalaga! — na quita maganda!" . . . Juan, the fastenings of those diamond ear-drops are much too complicated for your peon fingers: tear them out! — "Dispense, chulita!" . . .

. . . Suddenly a long, mighty silver trilling fills the ears of all: there is a wild hurrying and scurrying; swiftly, one after another, the overburdened luggers spread wings and flutter away.

Thrice the great cry rings rippling through the gray air, and over the green sea, and over the far-flooded shell-reefs, where the huge white flashes are

— sheet-lightning of breakers — and over the weird wash of corpses coming in.

It is the steam-call of the relief-boat, hastening to rescue the living, to gather in the dead.

The tremendous tragedy is over!

PART II

OUT OF THE SEA'S STRENGTH

I

THERE are regions of Louisiana coast whose aspect seems not of the present, but of the immemorial past — of that epoch when low flat reaches of primordial continent first rose into form above a Silurian Sea. To indulge this geologic dream, any fervid and breezeless day there, it is only necessary to ignore the evolutional protests of a few blue asters or a few composite flowers of the coryopsis sort, which contrive to display their rare flashes of color through the general waving of cat-heads, blood-weeds, wild cane, and marsh grasses. For, at a hasty glance, the general appearance of this marsh verdure is vague enough, as it ranges away towards the sand, to convey the idea of amphibious vegetation — a primitive flora as yet undecided whether to retain marine habits and forms, or to assume terrestrial ones; — and the occasional inspection of surprising shapes might strengthen this fancy. Queer flat-lying and many-branching things, which resemble sea-weeds in juiciness and color and consistency, crackle under your feet from time to time; the moist and weighty air seems heated rather from below than from above — less by the sun than by the radiation of a cooling world; and the mists of morning or evening appear

to simulate the vapory exhalation of volcanic forces — latent, but only dozing, and uncomfortably close to the surface. And indeed geologists have actually averred that those rare elevations of the soil — which, with their heavy coronets of evergreen foliage, not only look like islands, but are so called in the French nomenclature of the coast — have been prominences created by ancient mud volcanoes.

The family of a Spanish fisherman, Feliu Viosca, once occupied and gave its name to such an islet, quite close to the Gulf-shore — the loftiest bit of land along fourteen miles of just such marshy coast as I have spoken of. Landward, it dominated a desolation that wearied the eye to look at, a wilderness of reedy sloughs, patched at intervals with ranges of bitterweed, tufts of elbow-bushes, and broad reaches of saw-grass, stretching away to a bluish-green line of woods that closed the horizon, and imperfectly drained in the driest season by a slimy little bayou that continually vomited foul water into the sea. The point had been much discussed by geologists; it proved a godsend to United States surveyors weary of attempting to take observations among quagmires, moccasins, and arborescent weeds from fifteen to twenty feet high. Savage fishermen, at some unrecorded time, had heaped upon the eminence a hill of clam-shells — refuse of a million feasts; earth again had been formed over these, perhaps by the blind agency of worms working through centuries unnumbered; and

the new soil had given birth to a luxuriant vegetation. Millennial oaks interknotted their roots below its surface, and vouchsafed protection to many a frailer growth of shrub or tree — wild orange, water-willow, palmetto, locust, pomegranate, and many trailing tendrilled things, both green and gray. Then — perhaps about half a century ago — a few white fishermen cleared a place for themselves in this grove, and built a few palmetto cottages, with boat-houses and a wharf, facing the bayou. Later on this temporary fishing station became a permanent settlement: homes constructed of heavy timber and plaster mixed with the trailing moss of the oaks and cypresses took the places of the frail and fragrant huts of palmetto. Still the population itself retained a floating character: it ebbed and came, according to season and circumstances, according to luck or loss in the tilling of the sea. Viosca, the founder of the settlement, always remained; he always managed to do well. He owned several luggers and sloops, which were hired out upon excellent terms; he could make large and profitable contracts with New Orleans fish-dealers; and he was vaguely suspected of possessing more occult resources. There were some confused stories current about his having once been a daring smuggler, and having only been reformed by the pleadings of his wife Carmen — a little brown woman who had followed him from Barcelona to share his fortunes in the western world.

On hot days, when the shade was full of thin sweet scents, the place had a tropical charm, a drowsy peace. Nothing except the peculiar appearance of the line of oaks facing the Gulf could have conveyed to the visitor any suggestion of days in which the trilling of crickets and the fluting of birds had ceased, of nights when the voices of the marsh had been hushed for fear. In one enormous rank the veteran trees stood shoulder to shoulder, but in the attitude of giants overmastered — forced backward toward the marsh — made to recoil by the might of the ghostly enemy with whom they had striven a thousand years — the Shrieker, the Sky-Sweeper, the awful Sea-Wind!

Never had he given them so terrible a wrestle as on the night of the tenth of August, eighteen hundred and fifty-six. All the waves of the excited Gulf thronged in as if to see, and lifted up their voices, and pushed, and roared, until the chénière was islanded by such a billowing as no white man's eyes had ever looked upon before. Grandly the oaks bore themselves, but every fibre of their knotted thews was strained in the unequal contest, and two of the giants were overthrown, upturning, as they fell, roots coiled and huge as the serpent-limbs of Titans. Moved to its entrails, all the islet trembled, while the sea magnified its menace, and reached out whitely to the prostrate trees; but the rest of the oaks stood on, and strove in line, and saved the habitations defended by them. . . .

II

BEFORE a little waxen image of the Mother and Child — an odd little Virgin with an Indian face, brought home by Felix as a gift after one of his Mexican voyages — Carmen Viosca had burned candles and prayed; sometimes telling her beads; sometimes murmuring the litanies she knew by heart; sometimes also reading from a prayer-book worn and greasy as a long-used pack of cards. It was particularly stained at one page, a page on which her tears had fallen many a lonely night — a page with a clumsy wood-cut representing a celestial lamp, a symbolic radiance, shining through darkness, and on either side a kneeling angel with folded wings. And beneath this rudely wrought symbol of the Perpetual Calm appeared in big, coarse type the title of a prayer that has been offered up through many a century, doubtless, by wives of Spanish mariners — "Contra las Tempestades."

Once she became very much frightened. After a partial lull the storm had suddenly redoubled its force: the ground shook; the house quivered and creaked; the wind bayed and screamed and pushed and scuffled at the door; and the water, which had been whipping in through every crevice, all at once rose over the threshold and flooded the dwelling. Carmen dipped her finger in the water and tasted it. It was salt!

And none of Felix's boats had yet come in; —

doubtless they had been driven into some far-away bayous by the storm. The only boat at the settlement, the Carmencita, had been almost wrecked by running upon a snag three days before; — there was at least a fortnight's work for the ship-carpenter of Dead Cypress Point. And Feliu was sleeping as if nothing unusual had happened — the heavy sleep of a sailor, heedless of commotions and voices. And his men, Miguel and Mateo, were at the other end of the chénière.

With a scream Carmen aroused Feliu. He raised himself upon his elbow, rubbed his eyes, and asked her, with exasperating calmness, "Que tienes? que tienes?" (What ails thee?)

"Oh, Feliu! the sea is coming upon us!" she answered, in the same tongue. But she screamed out a word inspired by her fear: she did not cry, "Se nos viene el mar encima!" but "Se nos viene LA ALTURA!" — the name that conveys the terrible thought of depth swallowed up in height — the height of the *high sea.*

"No lo creo!" muttered Feliu, looking at the floor; then in a quiet, deep voice he said, pointing to an oar in the corner of the room, "Echame ese remo."

She gave it to him. Still reclining upon one elbow, Feliu measured the depth of the water with his thumb-nail upon the blade of the oar, and then bade Carmen light his pipe for him. His calmness reassured her. For half an hour more, undismayed by

the clamoring of the wind or the calling of the sea, Feliu silently smoked his pipe and watched his oar. The water rose a little higher, and he made another mark; — then it climbed a little more, but not so rapidly; and he smiled at Carmen as he made a third mark. "Como creia!" he exclaimed, "no hay porque asustarse: el agua baja!" And as Carmen would have continued to pray, he rebuked her fears, and bade her try to obtain some rest: "Basta ya de plegarios, querida! — vete y duerme." His tone, though kindly, was imperative; and Carmen, accustomed to obey him, laid herself down by his side, and soon, for very weariness, slept.

It was a feverish sleep, nevertheiess, shattered at brief intervals by terrible sounds — sounds magnified by her nervous condition — a sleep visited by dreams that mingled in a strange way with the impressions of the storm, and more than once made her heart stop, and start again at its own stopping. One of these fancies she never could forget — a dream about little Concha — Conchita, her first-born, who now slept far away in the old churchyard at Barcelona. She had tried to become resigned — not to think. But the child would come back night after night, though the earth lay heavy upon her — night after night, through long distances of Time and Space. Oh! the fancied clinging of infant-lips! — the thrilling touch of little ghostly hands! — those phantom-caresses that torture mothers' hearts! . . . Night after night, through many a month of pain.

Then for a time the gentle presence ceased to haunt her — seemed to have lain down to sleep forever under the high bright grass and yellow flowers. Why did it return, that night of all nights, to kiss her, to cling to her, to nestle in her arms? . . .

For in her dream she thought herself still kneeling before the waxen Image, while the terrors of the tempest were ever deepening about her — raving of winds and booming of waters and a shaking of the land. And before her, even as she prayed her dream-prayer, the waxen Virgin became tall as a woman, and taller — rising to the roof and smiling as she grew. Then Carmen would have cried out for fear, but that something smothered her voice — paralyzed her tongue. And the Virgin silently stooped above her, and placed in her arms the Child — the brown Child with the Indian face. And the Child whitened in her hands and changed — seeming as it changed to send a sharp pain through her heart: an old pain linked somehow with memories of bright windy Spanish hills, and summer-scent of olive groves, and all the luminous Past; — it looked into her face with the soft dark gaze, with the unforgotten smile of . . . dead Conchita!

And Carmen wished to thank the smiling Virgin for that priceless bliss, and lifted up her eyes; but the sickness of ghostly fear returned upon her when she looked; for now the Mother seemed as a woman long dead, and the smile was the smile of fleshlessness, and the places of the eyes were voids and dark-

nesses. . . . And the sea sent up so vast a roar that the dwelling rocked.

Carmen started from sleep to find her heart throbbing so that the couch shook with it. Night was growing gray; the door had just been opened and slammed again. Through the rain-whipped panes she discerned the passing shape of Feliu, making for the beach — a broad and bearded silhouette, bending against the wind. Still the waxen Virgin smiled her Mexican smile — but now she was only seven inches high; and her bead-glass eyes seemed to twinkle with kindliness while the flame of the last expiring taper struggled for life in the earthen socket at her feet.

III

RAIN and a blind sky and a bursting sea. Feliu and his men, Miguel and Mateo, looked out upon the thundering and flashing of the monstrous tide. The wind had fallen, and the gray air was full of gulls. Behind the chénière, back to the cloudy line of low woods many miles away, stretched a wash of lead-colored water, with a green point piercing it here and there — elbow-bushes or wild cane tall enough to keep their heads above the flood. But the inundation was visibly decreasing; — with the passing of each hour more and more green patches and points had been showing themselves: by degrees the course of the bayou had become defined — two parallel winding lines of dwarf-timber and bushy shrubs

traversing the water toward the distant cypress-swamps. Before the chénière all the shell-beach slope was piled with wreck — uptorn trees with the foliage still fresh upon them, splintered timbers of mysterious origin, and logs in multitude, scarred with gashes of the axe. Feliu and his comrades had saved wood enough to build a little town — working up to their waists in the surf, with ropes, poles, and boat-hooks. The whole sea was full of flotsam. Voto á Cristo! — what a wrecking there must have been! And to think the Carmencita could not be taken out!

They had seen other luggers making eastward during the morning — could recognize some by their sails, others by their gait — exaggerated in their struggle with the pitching of the sea: the San Pablo, the Gasparina, the Enriqueta, the Agueda, the Constanza. Ugly water, yes! — but what a chance for wreckers! . . . Some great ship must have gone to pieces; — scores of casks were rolling in the trough — casks of wine. Perhaps it was the Manila — perhaps the Nautilus!

A dead cow floated near enough for Mateo to throw his rope over one horn; and they all helped to get it out. It was a milch cow of some expensive breed; and the owner's brand had been burned upon the horns: — a monographic combination of the letters "A" and "P." Feliu said he knew that brand: Old-man Preaulx, of Belle-Isle, who kept a sort of dairy at Last Island during the summer season, used to mark all his cows that way. Strange!

But, as they worked on, they began to see stranger things — white dead faces and dead hands, which did not look like the hands or the faces of drowned sailors: the ebb was beginning to run strongly, and these were passing out with it on the other side of the mouth of the bayou; — perhaps they had been washed into the marsh during the night, when the great rush of the sea came. Then the three men left the water, and retired to higher ground to scan the furrowed Gulf; — their practiced eyes began to search the courses of the sea-currents — keen as the gaze of birds that watch the wake of the plough. And soon the casks and the drift were forgotten; for it seemed to them that the tide was heavy with human dead — passing out, processionally, to the great open. Very far, where the huge pitching of the swells was diminished by distance into a mere fluttering of ripples, the water appeared as if sprinkled with them; — they vanished and became visible again at irregular intervals, here and there — floating most thickly eastward — tossing, swaying patches of white or pink or blue or black, each with its tiny speck of flesh-color showing as the sea lifted or lowered the body. Nearer to shore there were few; but of these two were close enough to be almost recognizable: Miguel first discerned them. They were rising and falling where the water was deepest — well out in front of the mouth of the bayou, beyond the flooded sand-bars, and moving toward the shell-reef westward. They were drifting almost side

by side. One was that of a negro, apparently well attired, and wearing a white apron; — the other seemed to be a young colored girl, clad in a blue dress; she was floating upon her face; they could observe that she had nearly straight hair, braided and tied with a red ribbon. These were evidently house-servants — slaves. But from whence? Nothing could be learned until the luggers should return; and none of them was yet in sight. Still Feliu was not anxious as to the fate of his boats, manned by the best sailors of the coast. Rarely are these Louisiana fishermen lost in sudden storms; even when to other eyes the appearances are most pacific and the skies most splendidly blue, they divine some far-off danger, like the gulls; and like the gulls also, you see their light vessels fleeing landward. These men seem living barometers, exquisitely sensitive to all the invisible changes of atmospheric expansion and compression; they are not easily caught in those awful dead calms which suddenly paralyze the wings of a bark, and hold her helpless in their charmed circle, as in a nightmare, until the blackness overtakes her, and the long-sleeping sea leaps up foaming to devour her.

"Carajo!"

The word all at once bursts from Feliu's mouth, with that peculiar guttural snarl of the "r" betokening strong excitement — while he points to something rocking in the ebb, beyond the foaming of the shell-reef, under a circling of gulls. More dead?

Yes — but something too that lives and moves, like a quivering speck of gold; and Mateo also perceives it, a gleam of bright hair — and Miguel likewise, after a moment's gazing. A living child; — a lifeless mother. Pobrecíta! No boat within reach, and only a mighty surf-wrestler could hope to swim thither and return!

But already, without a word, brown Feliu has stripped for the struggle; — another second, and he is shooting through the surf, head and hands tunnelling the foam-hills. . . . One — two — three lines passed! — four! — that is where they first begin to crumble white from the summit — five! — that he can ride fearlessly! . . . Then swiftly, easily, he advances, with a long, powerful breast-stroke — keeping his bearded head well up to watch for drift — seeming to slide with a swing from swell to swell — ascending, sinking — alternately presenting breast or shoulder to the wave; always diminishing more and more to the eyes of Mateo and Miguel — till he becomes a moving speck, occasionally hard to follow through the confusion of heaping waters. . . . You are not afraid of the sharks, Feliu! — no: they are afraid of you; right and left they slunk away from your coming that morning you swam for life in West-Indian waters, with your knife in your teeth, while the balls of the Cuban coast-guard were purring all around you. That day the swarming sea was warm — warm like soup — and clear, with an emerald flash in every ripple — not opaque and

clamorous like the Gulf to-day. . . . Miguel and his comrade are anxious. Ropes are unrolled and interknotted into a line. Miguel remains on the beach; but Mateo, bearing the end of the line, fights his way out — swimming and wading by turns, to the farther sand-bar, where the water is shallow enough to stand in — if you know how to jump when the breaker comes.

But Feliu, nearing the flooded shell-bank, watches the white flashings — knows when the time comes to keep flat and take a long, long breath. One heavy volleying of foam — darkness and hissing as of a steam-burst; a vibrant lifting up; a rush into light — and again the volleying and the seething darkness. Once more — and the fight is won! He feels the upcoming chill of deeper water — sees before him the green quaking of unbroken swells — and far beyond him Mateo leaping on the bar — and beside him, almost within arm's-reach, a great billiard-table swaying, and a dead woman clinging there, and . . . the child.

A moment more, and Feliu has lifted himself beside the waifs. . . . How fast the dead woman clings, as if with the one power which is strong as death — the desperate force of love! Not in vain; for the frail creature bound to the mother's corpse with a silken scarf has still the strength to cry out: "Maman! maman!" But time is life now; and the tiny hands must be pulled away from the fair dead neck, and the scarf taken to bind the infant firmly

to Feliu's broad shoulders — quickly, roughly; for the ebb will not wait. . . .

And now Feliu has a burden; but his style of swimming has totally changed; — he rises from the water like a Triton, and his powerful arms seem to spin in circles, like the spokes of a flying wheel. For now is the wrestle indeed! — after each passing swell comes a prodigious pulling from beneath — the sea clutching for its prey. But the reef is gained, is passed; — the wild horses of the deep seem to know the swimmer who has learned to ride them so well. And still the brown arms spin in an ever-nearing mist of spray; and the outer sand-bar is not far off — and there is shouting Mateo, leaping in the surf, swinging something about his head, as a vaquero swings his noose! . . . Sough! splash! — it struggles in the trough beside Feliu, and the sinewy hand descends upon it. Tiene! — tíra, Miguel! And their feet touch land again! . . .

She is very cold, the child, and very still, with eyes closed.

"Esta muerta, Feliu?" asks Mateo.

"No!" the panting swimmer makes answer, emerging, while the waves reach whitely up the sand as in pursuit — "no; vive! — respira todavía!"

Behind him the deep lifts up its million hands, and thunders as in acclaim.

IV

"MADRE DE DIOS! — mi sueno!" screamed Carmen, abandoning her preparations for the morning meal, as Feliu, nude, like a marine god, rushed in and held out to her a dripping and gasping baby-girl — "Mother of God! my dream!" But there was no time then to tell of dreams; the child might die. In one instant Carmen's quick, deft hands had stripped the slender little body; and while Mateo and Feliu were finding dry clothing and stimulants, and Miguel telling how it all happened — quickly, passionately, with furious gesture — the kind and vigorous woman exerted all her skill to revive the flickering life. Soon Feliu came to aid her, while his men set to work completing the interrupted preparation of the breakfast. Flannels were heated for the friction of the frail limbs; and brandy-and-water warmed, which Carmen administered by the spoonful, skillfully as any physician — until, at last, the little creature opened her eyes and began to sob. Sobbing still, she was laid in Carmen's warm feather-bed, well swathed in woollen wrappings. The immediate danger, at least, was over; and Feliu smiled with pride and pleasure.

Then Carmen first ventured to relate her dream; and his face became grave again. Husband and wife gazed a moment into each other's eyes, feeling together the same strange thrill — that mysterious faint creeping, as of a wind passing, which is the awe

of the Unknowable. Then they looked at the child, lying there, pink-cheeked with the flush of the blood returning; and such a sudden tenderness touched them as they had known long years before, while together bending above the slumbering loveliness of lost Conchita.

"Que ojos!" murmured Feliu, as he turned away — feigning hunger. . . . (He was not hungry; but his sight had grown a little dim, as with a mist.) Que ojos! They were singular eyes, large, dark, and wonderfully fringed. The child's hair was yellow — it was the flash of it that had saved her; yet her eyes and brows were beautifully black. She was comely, but with such a curious, delicate comeliness — totally unlike the robust beauty of Concha. . . . At intervals she would moan a little between her sobs; and at last cried out, with a thin, shrill cry: "Maman! — oh! maman!" Then Carmen lifted her from the bed to her lap, and caressed her, and rocked her gently to and fro, as she had done many a night for Concha — murmuring — "Yo seré tu madre, angel mio, dulzura mia; — seré tu madrecita, palomita mia!" (I will be thy mother, my angel, my sweet; — I will be thy little mother, my doveling.) And the long silk fringes of the child's eyes overlapped, shadowed her little cheeks; and she slept — just as Conchita had slept long ago — with her head on Carmen's bosom.

Feliu re-appeared at the inner door: at a sign, he approached cautiously, without noise, and looked.

"She can talk," whispered Carmen in Spanish: "she called her mother" — ha llamado à su madre.

"Y Dios tambien la ha llamado," responded Feliu, with rude pathos; — "And *God also called her.*"

"But the Virgin sent us the child, Feliu — sent us the child for Concha's sake."

He did not answer at once; he seemed to be thinking very deeply; — Carmen anxiously scanned his impassive face.

"Who knows?" he answered, at last; — "who knows? Perhaps she has ceased to belong to any one else." . . .

One after another, Feliu's luggers fluttered in — bearing with them news of the immense calamity. And all the fishermen, in turn, looked at the child. Not one had ever seen her before.

V

TEN days later, a lugger full of armed men entered the bayou, and moored at Viosca's wharf. The visitors were, for the most part, country gentlemen — residents of Franklin and neighboring towns, or planters from the Têche country — forming one of the numerous expeditions organized for the purpose of finding the bodies of relatives or friends lost in the great hurricane, and of punishing the robbers of the dead. They had searched numberless nooks of the coast, had given sepulture to many corpses, had re-

covered a large amount of jewelry, and — as Feliu afterward learned — had summarily tried and executed several of the most abandoned class of wreckers found with ill-gotten valuables in their possession, and convicted of having mutilated the drowned. But they came to Viosca's landing only to obtain information; — he was too well known and liked to be a subject for suspicion; and, moreover, he had one good friend in the crowd — Captain Harris of New Orleans, a veteran steamboat man and a market-contractor, to whom he had disposed of many a cargo of fresh pompano, sheep's-head, and Spanish-mackerel. . . . Harris was the first to step to land; — some ten of the party followed him. Nearly all had lost some relative or friend in the great catastrophe; — the gathering was serious, silent — almost grim — which formed about Feliu.

Mateo, who had come to the country while a boy, spoke English better than the rest of the chénière people; — he acted as interpreter whenever Feliu found any difficulty in comprehending or answering questions; and he told them of the child rescued that wild morning, and of Feliu's swim. His recital evoked a murmur of interest and excitement, followed by a confusion of questions. Well, they could see for themselves, Feliu said; but he hoped they would have a little patience; — the child was still weak; — it might be dangerous to startle her. "We 'll arrange it just as you like," responded the captain; — "go ahead, Feliu!" . . .

All proceeded to the house, under the great trees; Feliu and Captain Harris leading the way. It was sultry and bright; — even the sea-breeze was warm; there were pleasant odors in the shade, and a soporific murmur made of leaf-speech and the hum of gnats. Only the captain entered the house with Feliu; the rest remained without — some taking seats on a rude plank bench under the oaks — others flinging themselves down upon the weeds — a few stood still, leaning upon their rifles. Then Carmen came out to them with gourds and a bucket of fresh water, which all were glad to drink.

They waited many minutes. Perhaps it was the cool peace of the place that made them all feel how hot and tired they were: conversation flagged; and the general languor finally betrayed itself in a silence so absolute that every leaf-whisper seemed to become separately audible.

It was broken at last by the guttural voice of the old captain emerging from the cottage, leading the child by the hand, and followed by Carmen and Feliu. All who had been resting rose up and looked at the child.

Standing in a lighted space, with one tiny hand enveloped by the captain's great brown fist, she looked so lovely that a general exclamation of surprise went up. Her bright hair, loose and steeped in the sun-flame, illuminated her like a halo; and her large dark eyes, gentle and melancholy as a deer's, watched the strange faces before her with shy curi-

osity. She wore the same dress in which Feliu had found her — a soft white fabric of muslin, with trimmings of ribbon that had once been blue; and the now discolored silken scarf, which had twice done her such brave service, was thrown over her shoulders. Carmen had washed and repaired the dress very creditably; but the tiny slim feet were bare — the brine-soaked shoes she wore that fearful night had fallen into shreds at the first attempt to remove them.

"Gentlemen," said Captain Harris — "we can find no clue to the identity of this child. There is no mark upon her clothing; and she wore nothing in the shape of jewelry — except this string of coral beads. We are nearly all Americans here; and she does not speak any English. . . . Does any one here know anything about her?"

Carmen felt a great sinking at her heart: was her new-found darling to be taken so soon from her? But no answer came to the captain's query. No one of the expedition had ever seen that child before. The coral beads were passed from hand to hand; the scarf was minutely scrutinized without avail. Somebody asked if the child could not talk German or Italian.

"Italiano? No!" said Feliu, shaking his head. . . . One of his luggermen, Gioachino Sparicio, who, though a Sicilian, could speak several Italian idioms besides his own, had already essayed.

"She speaks something or other," answered the

captain — "but no English. I could n't make her understand me; and Feliu, who talks nearly all the infernal languages spoken down this way, says he can't make her understand him. Suppose some of you who know French talk to her a bit. . . . Laroussel, why don't you try?"

The young man addressed did not at first seem to notice the captain's suggestion. He was a tall, lithe fellow, with a dark, positive face: he had never removed his black gaze from the child since the moment of her appearance. Her eyes, too, seemed to be all for him — to return his scrutiny with a sort of vague pleasure, a half-savage confidence. . . . Was it the first embryonic feeling of race-affinity quickening in the little brain? — some intuitive, inexplicable sense of kindred? She shrank from Dr. Hecker, who addressed her in German, shook her head at Lawyer Solari, who tried to make her answer in Italian; and her look always went back plaintively to the dark, sinister face of Laroussel — Laroussel who had calmly taken a human life, a wicked human life, only the evening before.

"Laroussel, you're the only Creole in this crowd," said the captain: "talk to her! Talk gumbo to her! . . . I've no doubt this child knows German very well, and Italian too" — he added, maliciously — "but not in the way you gentlemen pronounce it!"

Laroussel handed his rifle to a friend, crouched down before the little girl, and looked into her face, and smiled. Her great sweet orbs shone into his

one moment, seriously, as if searching; and then . . . she returned his smile. It seemed to touch something latent within the man, something rare; for his whole expression changed; and there was a caress in his look and voice none of the men could have believed possible — as he exclaimed:

"Fais moin bo, piti."

She pouted up her pretty lips and kissed his black moustache.

He spoke to her again:

"Dis moin to nom, piti; — dis moin to nom, chère."

Then, for the first time, she spoke, answering in her argent treble:

"Zouzoune."

All held their breath. Captain Harris lifted his finger to his lips to command silence.

"Zouzoune? Zouzoune qui, chère?"

"Zouzoune, ça c'est moin, Lili!"

"C'est pas tout to nom, Lili; — dis moin, chère, to laut nom."

"Mo pas connin laut nom."

"Commente yé té pélé to maman, piti?"

"Maman — Maman 'Dèle."

"Et comment yé té pélé to papa, chère?"

"Papa Zulien."

"Bon! Et comment to maman té pélé to papa? — dis ça à moin, chère?"

The child looked down, put a finger in her mouth, thought a moment, and replied:

"Li pélé li, 'Chéri'; li pélé li, 'Papoute.'"

"Aïe, aïe! — c'est tout, ça? — to maman té jamain pélé li daut' chose?"

"Mo pas connin, moin."

She began to play with some trinkets attached to his watch chain; — a very small gold compass especially impressed her fancy by the trembling and flashing of its tiny needle, and she murmured, coaxingly:

"Mo oulé ça! Donnin ça à moin."

He took all possible advantage of the situation, and replied at once:

"Oui! mo va donnin toi ça si to di moin to laut nom."

The splendid bribe evidently impressed her greatly; for tears rose to the brown eyes as she answered:

"Mo pas capab di' ça; — mo pas capab di' laut nom. . . . Mo oulé; mo pas capab!"

Laroussel explained. The child's name was Lili — perhaps a contraction of Eulalie; and her pet Creole name Zouzoune. He thought she must be the daughter of wealthy people; but she could not, for some reason or other, tell her family name. Perhaps she could not pronounce it well, and was afraid of being laughed at: some of the old French names were very hard for Creole children to pronounce, so long as the little ones were indulged in the habit of talking the patois; and after a certain age their mispronunciations would be made fun of in order to

accustom them to abandon the idiom of the slave-nurses, and to speak only French. Perhaps, again, she was really unable to recall the name: certain memories might have been blurred in the delicate brain by the shock of that terrible night. She said her mother's name was Adèle, and her father's Julien; but these were very common names in Louisiana — and could afford scarcely any better clue than the innocent statement that her mother used to address her father as "dear" (Chéri) — or with the Creole diminutive "little papa" (Papoute). Then Laroussel tried to reach a clue in other ways, without success. He asked her about where she lived — what the place was like; and she told him about fig-trees in a court, and galleries, and banquettes, and spoke of a faubou' — without being able to name any street. He asked her what her father used to do, and was assured that he did everything — that there was nothing he could not do. Divine absurdity of childish faith! — infinite artlessness of childish love! . . . Probably the little girl's parents had been residents of New Orleans — dwellers of the old colonial quarter — the faubourg, the faubou'.

"Well, gentlemen," said Captain Harris, as Laroussel abandoned his cross-examination in despair — "all we can do now is to make inquiries. I suppose we 'd better leave the child here. She is very weak yet, and in no condition to be taken to the city, right in the middle of the hot season; and no-

body could care for her any better than she's being cared for here. Then, again, seems to me that as Feliu saved her life — and that at the risk of his own — he's got the prior claim, anyhow; and his wife is just crazy about the child — wants to adopt her. If we can find her relatives so much the better; but I say, gentlemen, let them come right here to Feliu, themselves, and thank him as he ought to be thanked, by God! That 's just what I think about it."

Carmen understood the little speech; — all the Spanish charm of her youth had faded out years before; but in the one swift look of gratitude she turned upon the captain, it seemed to blossom again; — for that quick moment, she was beautiful.

"The captain is quite right," observed Dr. Hecker: "it would be very dangerous to take the child away just now." There was no dissent.

"All correct, boys?" asked the captain. . . . "Well, we 've got to be going. By-by, Zouzoune!"

But Zouzoune burst into tears. Laroussel was going too!

"Give her the thing, Laroussel! she gave you a kiss, anyhow — more than she 'd do for me," cried the captain.

Laroussel turned, detached the little compass from his watch chain, and gave it to her. She held up her pretty face for his farewell kiss. . . .

VI

BUT it seemed fated that Feliu's waif should never be identified; — diligent inquiry and printed announcements alike proved fruitless. Sea and sand had either hidden or effaced all the records of the little world they had engulfed: the annihilation of whole families, the extinction of races, had, in more than one instance, rendered vain all efforts to recognize the dead. It required the subtle perception of long intimacy to name remains tumefied and discolored by corruption and exposure, mangled and gnawed by fishes, by reptiles, and by birds; — it demanded the great courage of love to look upon the eyeless faces found sweltering in the blackness of cypress shadows, under the low palmettoes of the swamps — where gorged buzzards started from sleep, or cottonmouths uncoiled, hissing, at the coming of the searchers. And sometimes all who had loved the lost were themselves among the missing. The full roll-call of names could never be made out; — extraordinary mistakes were committed. Men whom the world deemed dead and buried came back, like ghosts — to read their own epitaphs.

. . . Almost at the same hour that Laroussel was questioning the child in Creole patois, another expedition, searching for bodies along the coast, discovered on the beach of a low islet famed as a haunt of pelicans, the corpse of a child. Some locks of

bright hair still adhering to the skull, a string of red beads, a white muslin dress, a handkerchief broidered with the initials "A. L. B." — were secured as clues; and the little body was interred where it had been found.

And, several days before, Captain Hotard, of the relief-boat Estelle Brousseaux, had found, drifting in the open Gulf (latitude 26° 43′; longitude 88° 17′) — the corpse of a fair-haired woman, clinging to a table. The body was disfigured beyond recognition: even the slender bones of the hands had been stripped by the nibs of the sea-birds — except one finger, the third of the left, which seemed to have been protected by a ring of gold, as by a charm. Graven within the plain yellow circlet was a date — "JUILLET — 1851"; and the names — "ADÈLE + JULIEN" — separated by a cross. The Estelle carried coffins that day: most of them were already full; but there was one for Adèle.

Who was she? — who was her Julien? . . . When the Estelle and many other vessels had discharged their ghastly cargoes; — when the bereaved of the land had assembled as hastily as they might for the duty of identification; — when memories were strained almost to madness in research of names, dates, incidents — for the evocation of dead words, resurrection of vanished days, recollection of dear promises — then, in the confusion, it was believed and declared that the little corpse found on the pelican island was the daughter of the wearer of the

wedding-ring: Adèle La Brierre, née Florane, wife of Dr. Julien La Brierre, of New Orleans, who was numbered among the missing.

And they brought dead Adèle back — up shadowy river windings, over linked brightnesses of lake and lakelet, through many a green-glimmering bayou — to the Creole city, and laid her to rest somewhere in the old Saint Louis Cemetery. And upon the tablet recording her name were also graven the words:

. . . . . .
Aussi à la mémoire de
son mari,
JULIEN RAYMOND LA BRIERRE,
né à la paroisse St. Landry,
le 29 Mai, MDCCCXXVIII;
et de leur fille,
EULALIE,
agée de 4 ans et 5 mois —
Qui tous périrent
dans la grande tempête qui
balayâ L'Île Dernière, le
10 Août, MDCCCLVI
. . . + . . .
Priez pour eux!

VII

YET six months afterward the face of Julien La Brierre was seen again upon the streets of New Orleans. Men started at the sight of him, as at a spectre standing in the sun. And nevertheless the apparition cast a shadow. People paused, approached, half extended a hand through old habit,

suddenly checked themselves and passed on — wondering they should have forgotten, asking themselves why they had so nearly made an absurd mistake.

It was a February day — one of those crystalline days of our snowless Southern winter, when the air is clear and cool, and outlines sharpen in the light as if viewed through the focus of a diamond glass; — and in that brightness Julien La Brierre perused his own brief epitaph, and gazed upon the sculptured name of drowned Adèle. Only half a year had passed since she was laid away in the high wall of tombs — in that strange colonial columbarium where the dead slept in rows, behind squared marbles lettered in black or bronze. Yet her resting-place — in the highest range — already seemed old. Under our Southern sun, the vegetation of cemeteries seems to spring into being spontaneously — to leap all suddenly into luxuriant life! Microscopic mossy growths had begun to mottle the slab that closed her in; — over its face some singular creeper was crawling, planting tiny reptile-feet into the chiseled letters of the inscription; and from the moist soil below speckled euphorbias were growing up to her — and morning-glories — and beautiful green tangled things of which he did not know the name.

And the sight of the pretty lizards, puffing their crimson pouches in the sun, or undulating athwart epitaphs, and shifting their color when approached, from emerald to ashen-gray; — the caravans of the

ants, journeying to and from tiny chinks in the masonry; — the bees gathering honey from the crimson blossoms of the crête-de-coq, whose radicles sought sustenance, perhaps from human dust, in the decay of generations: — all that rich life of graves summoned up fancies of Resurrection, Nature's resurrection-work — wondrous transformations of flesh, marvelous transmigration of souls! . . . From some forgotten crevice of that tomb roof, which alone intervened between her and the vast light, a sturdy weed was growing. He knew that plant, as it quivered against the blue — the chou-gras, as Creole children call it: its dark berries form the mocking-bird's favorite food. . . . Might not its roots, exploring darkness, have found some unfamiliar nutriment within? — might it not be that something of the dead heart had risen to purple and emerald life — in the sap of translucent leaves, in the wine of the savage berries — to blend with the blood of the Wizard Singer — to lend a strange sweetness to the melody of his wooing? . . .

. . . Seldom, indeed, does it happen that a man in the prime of youth, in the possession of wealth, habituated to comforts and the elegances of life, discovers in one brief week how minute his true relation to the human aggregate — how insignificant his part as one living atom of the social organism. Seldom, at the age of twenty-eight, has one been made able to comprehend, through experience

alone, that in the vast and complex Stream of Being he counts for less than a drop; and that, even as the blood loses and replaces its corpuscles, without a variance in the volume and vigor of its current, so are individual existences eliminated and replaced in the pulsing of a people's life, with never a pause in its mighty murmur. But all this, and much more, Julien had learned in seven merciless days — seven successive and terrible shocks of experience. The enormous world had not missed him; and his place therein was not void — society had simply forgotten him. So long as he had moved among them, all he knew for friends had performed their petty altruistic rôles — had discharged their small human obligations — had kept turned toward him the least selfish side of their natures — had made with him a tolerably equitable exchange of ideas and of favors; and after his disappearance from their midst, they had duly mourned for his loss — to themselves! They had played out the final act in the unimportant drama of his life: it was really asking too much to demand a repetition. . . . Impossible to deceive himself as to the feeling his unanticipated return had aroused: — feigned pity where he had looked for sympathetic welcome; dismay where he had expected surprised delight; and, oftener, airs of resignation, or disappointment ill disguised — always insincerity, politely masked or coldly bare. He had come back to find strangers in his home, relatives at law concerning his estate,

and himself regarded as an intruder among the living — an unlucky guest, a revenant. . . . How hollow and selfish a world it seemed! And yet there was love in it; he had been loved in it, unselfishly, passionately, with the love of father and of mother, of wife and child. . . . All buried! — all lost forever! . . . Oh! would to God the story of that stone were not a lie! — would to kind God he also were dead! . . .

Evening shadowed: the violet deepened and prickled itself with stars; — the sun passed below the west, leaving in his wake a momentary splendor of vermilion . . . our Southern day is not prolonged by gloaming. And Julien's thoughts darkened with the darkening, and as swiftly. For while there was yet light to see, he read another name that he used to know — the name of RAMIREZ. . . . Nació en Cienfuegos, isla de Cuba. . . . Wherefore born? — for what eternal purpose, Ramirez — in the City of a Hundred Fires? He had blown out his brains before the sepulchre of his young wife. . . . It was a detached double vault, shaped like a huge chest, and much dilapidated already: — under the continuous burrowing of the crawfish it had sunk greatly on one side, tilting as if about to fall. Out from its zigzag fissurings of brick and plaster, a sinister voice seemed to come: "*Go thou and do likewise! . . . Earth groans with her burthen even now — the burthen of Man: she holds no place for thee!*"

VIII

. . . THAT voice pursued him into the darkness of his chilly room — haunted him in the silence of his lodging. And then began within the man that ghostly struggle between courage and despair, between patient reason and mad revolt, between weakness and force, between darkness and light, which all sensitive and generous natures must wage in their own souls at least once — perhaps many times — in their lives. Memory, in such moments, plays like an electric storm; — all involuntarily he found himself reviewing his life.

Incidents long forgotten came back with singular vividness: he saw the Past as he had not seen it while it was the Present; — remembrances of home, recollections of infancy, recurred to him with terrible intensity — the artless pleasures and the trifling griefs, the little hurts and the tender pettings, the hopes and the anxieties of those who loved him, the smiles and tears of slaves. . . . And his first Creole pony, a present from his father the day after he had proved himself able to recite his prayers correctly in French, without one mispronunciation — without saying crasse for grâce; — and yellow Michel, who taught him to swim and to fish and to paddle a pirogue; — and the bayou, with its wonder-world of turtles and birds and creeping things; — and his German tutor, who could not pronounce the "j"; — and the songs of the cane-fields — strangely pleas-

ing, full of quaverings and long plaintive notes, like the call of the cranes. . . . Tou', tou' pays blanc! . . . Afterward Camanière had leased the place; — everything must have been changed; even the songs could not be the same. Tou', tou' pays blanc! — Danié qui commandé. . . .

And then Paris; and the university, with its wild under-life — some debts, some follies; and the frequent fond letters from home to which he might have replied so much oftener; — Paris, where talent is mediocrity; Paris, with its thunders and its splendors and its seething of passion; — Paris, supreme focus of human endeavor, with its madnesses of art, its frenzied striving to express the Inexpressible, its spasmodic strainings to clutch the Unattainable, its soarings of soul-fire to the heaven of the Impossible. . . .

What a rejoicing there was at his return! — how radiant and level the long Road of the Future seemed to open before him! — everywhere friends, prospects, felicitations. Then his first serious love; — and the night of the ball at Saint Martinsville — the vision of light! Gracile as a palm, and robed at once so simply, so exquisitely in white, she had seemed to him the supreme realization of all possible dreams of beauty. . . . And his passionate jealousy; and the slap from Laroussel; and the humiliating two-minute duel with rapiers in which he learned that he had found his master. The scar was deep. Why had not Laroussel killed him then?

. . . Not evil-hearted, Laroussel; — they used to salute each other afterward when they met; and Laroussel's smile was kindly. Why had he refrained from returning it? Where was Laroussel now?

For the death of his generous father, who had sacrificed so much to reform him; for the death, only a short while after, of his all-forgiving mother, he had found one sweet woman to console him with her tender words, her loving lips, her delicious caress. She had given him Zouzoune, the darling link between their lives — Zouzoune, who waited each evening with black Églantine at the gate to watch for his coming, and to cry through all the house like a bird, "Papa, lapé vini! — papa Zulien apé vini!" . . . And once that she had made him very angry by upsetting the ink over a mass of business papers, and he had slapped her (could he ever forgive himself?) — she had cried, through her sobs of astonishment and pain: "To laimin moin? — to batté moin!" (Thou lovest me? — thou beatest me!) Next month she would have been five years old. To laimin moin? — to batté moin! . . .

A furious paroxysm of grief convulsed him, suffocated him; it seemed to him that something within must burst, must break. He flung himself down upon his bed, biting the coverings in order to stifle his outcry, to smother the sounds of his despair. What crime had he ever done, O God! that he should be made to suffer thus? — was it for this he had been

permitted to live? had been rescued from the sea and carried round all the world unscathed? Why should he live to remember, to suffer, to agonize? Was not Ramirez wiser?

How long the contest within him lasted, he never knew; but ere it was done, he had become, in more ways than one, a changed man. For the first — though not indeed for the last — time something of the deeper and nobler comprehension of human weakness and of human suffering had been revealed to him — something of that larger knowledge without which the sense of duty can never be fully acquired, nor the understanding of unselfish goodness, nor the spirit of tenderness. The suicide is not a coward he is an egotist.

A ray of sunlight touched his wet pillow — awoke him. He rushed to the window, flung the latticed shutters apart, and looked out.

Something beautiful and ghostly filled all the vistas — frost-haze; and in some queer way the mist had momentarily caught and held the very color of the sky. An azure fog! Through it the quaint and checkered street — as yet but half illumined by the sun — took tones of impossible color; the view paled away through faint bluish tints into transparent purples; — all the shadows were indigo. How sweet the morning! — how well life seemed worth living! Because the sun had shown his face through a fairy-veil of frost! . . .

Who was the ancient thinker? -- was it Hermes? who said:

"*The Sun is Laughter; for 't is He who maketh joyous the thoughts of men, and gladdeneth the infinite world.*" . . .

PART III

THE SHADOW OF THE TIDE

I

CARMEN found that her little pet had been taught how to pray; for each night and morning when the devout woman began to make her orisons, the child would kneel beside her, with little hands joined, and in a voice sweet and clear murmur something she had learned by heart. Much as this pleased Carmen, it seemed to her that the child's prayers could not be wholly valid unless uttered in Spanish; — for Spanish was Heaven's own tongue — la lengua de Dios, el idioma de Dios; and she resolved to teach her to say the Salve Maria and the Padre Nuestro in Castilian — also her own favorite prayer to the Virgin, beginning with the words, "Madre santisima, toda dulce y hermosa." . . .

So Conchita — for a new name had been given to her with that terrible sea-christening — received her first lessons in Spanish; and she proved a most intelligent pupil. Before long she could prattle to Feliu; — she would watch for his return of evenings, and announce his coming with "Aqui viene mi papacito!" — she learned, too, from Carmen, many little caresses of speech to greet him with. Feliu's was not a joyous nature; he had his dark hours, his

sombre days; yet it was rarely that he felt too sullen to yield to the little one's petting, when she would leap up to reach his neck and to coax his kiss, with — "Dame un beso, papa! — así; — y otro! otro! otro!" He grew to love her like his own; — was she not indeed his own, since he had won her from death? And none had yet come to dispute his claim. More and more, with the passing of weeks, months, seasons, she became a portion of his life — a part of all that he wrought for. At the first, he had had a half-formed hope that the little one might be reclaimed by relatives generous and rich enough to insist upon his acceptance of a handsome compensation; and that Carmen could find some solace in a pleasant visit to Barceloneta. But now he felt that no possible generosity could requite him for her loss; and with the unconscious selfishness of affection, he commenced to dread her identification as a great calamity.

It was evident that she had been brought up nicely. She had pretty prim ways of drinking and eating, queer little fashions of sitting in company, and of addressing people. She had peculiar notions about colors in dress, about wearing her hair; and she seemed to have already imbibed a small stock of social prejudices not altogether in harmony with the republicanism of Viosca's Point. Occasional swarthy visitors — men of the Manilla settlements — she spoke of contemptuously as "nègues-marrons"; and once she shocked Carmen inexpressibly

by stopping in the middle of her evening prayer, declaring that she wanted to say her prayers to a *white* Virgin; Carmen's Señora de Guadalupe was only a negra! Then, for the first time, Carmen spoke so crossly to the child as to frighten her. But the pious woman's heart smote her the next moment for that first harsh word; — and she caressed the motherless one, consoled her, cheered her, and at last explained to her — I know not how — something very wonderful about the little figurine, something that made Chita's eyes big with awe. Thereafter she always regarded the Virgin of Wax as an object mysterious and holy.

And, one by one, most of Chita's little eccentricities were gradually eliminated from her developing life and thought. More rapidly than ordinary children, because singularly intelligent, she learned to adapt herself to all the changes of her new environment — retaining only that indescribable something which to an experienced eye tells of hereditary refinement of habit and of mind: — a natural grace, a thoroughbred ease and elegance of movement, a quickness and delicacy of perception.

She became strong again and active — active enough to play a great deal on the beach, when the sun was not too fierce; and Carmen made a canvas bonnet to shield her head and face. Never had she been allowed to play so much in the sun before; and it seemed to do her good, though her little bare feet and hands became brown as copper. At first, it must

be confessed, she worried her foster-mother a great deal by various queer misfortunes and extraordinary freaks; — getting bitten by crabs, falling into the bayou while in pursuit of "fiddlers," or losing herself at the conclusion of desperate efforts to run races at night with the moon, or to walk to the "end of the world." If she could only once get to the edge of the sky, she said, she "could climb up." She wanted to see the stars, which were the souls of good little children; and she knew that God would let her climb up. "Just what I am afraid of!" — thought Carmen to herself; — "He might let her climb up — a little ghost!" But one day naughty Chita received a terrible lesson — a lasting lesson — which taught her the value of obedience.

She had been particularly cautioned not to venture into a certain part of the swamp in the rear of the grove, where the weeds were very tall; for Carmen was afraid some snake might bite the child. But Chita's bird-bright eye had discerned a gleam of white in that direction; and she wanted to know what it was. The white could only be seen from one point, behind the farthest house, where the ground was high. "Never go there," said Carmen; "there is a Dead Man there — will bite you!" And yet, one day, while Carmen was unusually busy, Chita went there.

In the early days of the settlement, a Spanish fisherman had died; and his comrades had built him a little tomb with the surplus of the same bricks

and other material brought down the bayou for the construction of Viosca's cottages. But no one, except perhaps some wandering duck hunter, had approached the sepulchre for years. High weeds and grasses wrestled together all about it, and rendered it totally invisible from the surrounding level of the marsh.

Fiddlers swarmed away as Chita advanced over the moist soil, each uplifting its single huge claw as it sidled off; — then frogs began to leap before her as she reached the thicker grass; — and long-legged brown insects sprang showering to right and left as she parted the tufts of the thickening verdure. As she went on, the bitter-weeds disappeared; — jointed grasses and sinewy dark plants of a taller growth rose above her head: she was almost deafened by the storm of insect shrilling, and the mosquitoes became very wicked. All at once something long and black and heavy wriggled almost from under her naked feet — squirming so horribly that for a minute or two she could not move for fright. But it slunk away somewhere, and hid itself; the weeds it had shaken ceased to tremble in its wake; and her courage returned. She felt such an exquisite and fearful pleasure in the gratification of that naughty curiosity! Then, quite unexpectedly — oh! what a start it gave her! — the solitary white object burst upon her view, leprous and ghastly as the yawn of a cottonmouth. Tombs ruin soon in Louisiana; — the one Chita looked upon seemed ready to topple

down. There was a great ragged hole at one end, where wind and rain, and perhaps also the burrowing of crawfish and of worms, had loosened the bricks, and caused them to slide out of place. It seemed very black inside; but Chita wanted to know what was there. She pushed her way through a gap in the thin and rotten line of pickets, and through some tall weeds with big coarse pink flowers; — then she crouched down on hands and knees before the black hole, and peered in. It was not so black inside as she had thought; for a sunbeam slanted down through a chink in the roof; and she could see!

A brown head — without hair, without eyes, but with teeth, ever so many teeth! — seemed to laugh at her; and close to it sat a Toad, the hugest she had ever seen; and the white skin of his throat kept puffing out and going in. And Chita screamed and screamed, and fled in wild terror — screaming all the way, till Carmen ran out to meet her and carry her home. Even when safe in her adopted mother's arms, she sobbed with fright. To the vivid fancy of the child there seemed to be some hideous relation between the staring reptile and the brown death's-head, with its empty eyes, and its nightmare-smile.

The shock brought on a fever — a fever that lasted several days, and left her very weak. But the experience taught her to obey, taught her that Carmen knew best what was for her good. It also caused her to think a great deal. Carmen had told

her that the dead people never frightened good little girls who stayed at home.

"Madrecita Carmen," she asked, "is my mamma dead?"

"Pobrecita! . . . Yes, my angel. God called her to Him — your darling mother."

"Madrecita," she asked again — her young eyes growing vast with horror — "is my own mamma now like *That?*" . . . She pointed toward the place of the white gleam, behind the great trees.

"No, no, no! my darling!" cried Carmen, appalled herself by the ghastly question — "your mamma is with the dear, good, loving God, who lives in the beautiful sky — above the clouds, my darling, beyond the sun!"

But Carmen's kind eyes were full of tears; and the child read their meaning. He who teareth off the Mask of the Flesh had looked into her face one unutterable moment: — she had seen the brutal Truth, naked to the bone!

Yet there came to her a little thrill of consolation, caused by the words of the tender falsehood; for that which she had discerned by day could not explain to her that which she saw almost nightly in her slumber. The face, the voice, the form of her loving mother still lived somewhere — could not have utterly passed away; since the sweet presence came to her in dreams, bending and smiling over her, caressing her, speaking to her — sometimes gently chiding, but always chiding with a kiss.

And then the child would laugh in her sleep, and prattle in Creole — talking to the luminous shadow, telling the dead mother all the little deeds and thoughts of the day. . . . Why would God only let her come at night?

. . . Her idea of God had been first defined by the sight of a quaint French picture of the Creation — an engraving which represented a shoreless sea under a black sky, and out of the blackness a solemn and bearded gray head emerging, and a cloudy hand through which stars glimmered. God was like old Dr. de Coulanges, who used to visit the house, and talk in a voice like a low roll of thunder. . . . At a later day, when Chita had been told that God was "everywhere at the same time" — without and within, beneath and above all things — this idea became somewhat changed. The awful bearded face, the huge shadowy hand, did not fade from her thought; but they became fantastically blended with the larger and vaguer notion of something that filled the world and reached to the stars — something diaphanous and incomprehensible like the invisible air, omnipresent and everlasting like the high blue of heaven. . . .

II

. . . She began to learn the life of the coast.

With her acquisition of another tongue, there came to her also the understanding of many things relating to the world of the sea. She memorized

with novel delight much that was told her day by day concerning the nature surrounding her — many secrets of the air, many of those signs of heaven which the dwellers in cities cannot comprehend because the atmosphere is thickened and made stagnant above them — cannot even watch because the horizon is hidden from their eyes by walls, and by weary avenues of trees with whitewashed trunks. She learned, by listening, by asking, by observing also, how to know the signs that foretell wild weather: — tremendous sunsets, scuddings and bridgings of cloud — sharpening and darkening of the sea-line — and the shriek of gulls flashing to land in level flight, out of a still transparent sky — and halos about the moon.

She learned where the sea-birds, with white bosoms and brown wings, made their hidden nests of sand — and where the cranes waded for their prey — and where the beautiful wild-ducks, plumaged in satiny lilac and silken green, found their food — and where the best reeds grew to furnish stems for Feliu's red-clay pipe — and where the ruddy sea-beams were most often tossed upon the shore — and how the gray pelicans fished all together, like men — moving in far-extending semicircles, beating the flood with their wings to drive the fish before them.

And from Carmen she learned the fables and the sayings of the sea — the proverbs about its deafness, its avarice, its treachery, its terrific power — espe-

cially one that haunted her for all time thereafter: Si quieres aprender á orar, entra en el mar (If thou wouldst learn to pray, go to the sea). She learned why the sea is salt — how "the tears of women made the waves of the sea" — and how the sea has "no friends" — and how the cat's eyes change with the tides.

What had she lost of life by her swift translation from the dusty existence of cities to the open immensity of nature's freedom? What did she gain?

Doubtless she was saved from many of those little bitternesses and restraints and disappointments which all well-bred city children must suffer in the course of their training for the more or less factitious life of society: — obligations to remain very still with every nimble nerve quivering in dumb revolt; — the injustice of being found troublesome and being sent to bed early for the comfort of her elders; — the cruel necessity of straining her pretty eyes, for many long hours at a time, over grimy desks in gloomy school-rooms, though birds might twitter and bright winds flutter in the trees without; — the austere constraint and heavy drowsiness of warm churches, filled with the droning echoes of a voice preaching incomprehensible things; — the progressively augmenting weariness of lessons in deportment, in dancing, in music, in the impossible art of keeping her dresses unruffled and unsoiled. Perhaps she never had any reason to regret all these.

She went to sleep and awakened with the wild

birds; — her life remained as unfettered by formalities as her fine feet by shoes. Excepting Carmen's old prayerbook — in which she learned to read a little — her childhood passed without books — also without pictures, without dainties, without music, without theatrical amusements. But she saw and heard and felt much of that which, though old as the heavens and the earth, is yet eternally new and eternally young with the holiness of beauty — eternally mystical and divine — eternally weird: the unveiled magnificence of Nature's moods — the perpetual poem hymned by wind and surge — the everlasting splendor of the sky.

She saw the quivering pinkness of waters curled by the breath of the morning — under the deepening of the dawn — like a far fluttering and scattering of rose-leaves of fire; —

Saw the shoreless, cloudless, marvelous double-circling azure of perfect summer days — twin glories of infinite deeps interreflected, while the Soul of the World lay still, suffused with a jewel-light, as of vaporized sapphire; —

Saw the Sea shift color — "change sheets" — when the viewless Wizard of the Wind breathed upon its face, and made it green; —

Saw the immeasurable panics — noiseless, scintillant — which silver, summer after summer, curved leagues of beach with bodies of little fish — the yearly massacre of migrating populations, nations of sea-trout, driven from their element by terror; —

and the winnowing of shark-fins — and the rushing of porpoises — and the rising of the grande-écaille, like a pillar of flame — and the diving and pitching and fighting of the frigates and the gulls — and the armored hordes of crabs swarming out to clear the slope after the carnage and the gorging had been done; —

Saw the Dreams of the Sky — scudding mockeries of ridged foam — and shadowy stratification of capes and coasts and promontories long-drawn-out — and imageries, multicolored, of mountain frondage, and sierras whitening above sierras — and phantom islands ringed around with lagoons of glory; —

Saw the toppling and smouldering of cloud-worlds after the enormous conflagration of sunsets — incandescence ruining into darkness; and after it a moving and climbing of stars among the blacknesses — like searching lamps; —

Saw the deep kindle countless ghostly candles as for mysterious night-festival — and a luminous billowing under a black sky, and effervescences of fire, and the twirling and crawling of phosphoric foam; —

Saw the mesmerism of the Moon; — saw the enchanted tides self-heaped in muttering obeisance before her.

Often she heard the Music of the Marsh through the night: an infinity of flutings and tinklings made by tiny amphibia — like the low blowing of numberless little tin horns, the clanking of billions of little

bells; — and, at intervals, profound tones, vibrant and heavy, as of a bass-viol — the orchestra of the great frogs! And interweaving with it all, one continuous shrilling — keen as the steel speech of a saw — the stridulous telegraphy of crickets.

But always — always, dreaming or awake, she heard the huge blind Sea chanting that mystic and eternal hymn, which none may hear without awe, which no musician can learn; —

Heard the hoary Preacher — El Pregonador — preaching the ancient Word, the word "as a fire, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces," — the Elohim-Word of the Sea! . . .

Unknowingly she came to know the immemorial sympathy of the mind with the Soul of the World — the melancholy wrought by its moods of gray, the reverie responsive to its vagaries of mist, the exhilaration of its vast exultings — days of windy joy, hours of transfigured light.

She felt — even without knowing it — the weight of the Silences, the solemnities of sky and sea in these low regions where all things seem to dream — waters and grasses with their momentary wavings — woods gray-webbed with mosses that drip and drool — horizons with their delusions of vapor — cranes meditating in their marshes — kites floating in the high blue. . . . Even the children were singularly quiet; and their play less noisy — though she could not have learned the difference — than the play of city children. Hour after hour, the women sewed

or wove in silence. And the brown men — always barefooted, always wearing rough blue shirts — seemed, when they lounged about the wharf on idle days, as if they had told each other long ago all they knew or could ever know, and had nothing more to say. They would stare at the flickering of the current, at the drifting of clouds and buzzards — seldom looking at each other, and always turning their black eyes again, in a weary way, to sky or sea. Even thus one sees the horses and the cattle of the coast, seeking the beach to escape the whizzing flies; — all watch the long waves rolling in, and sometimes turn their heads a moment to look at one another, but always look back to the waves again, as if wondering at a mystery. . . .

How often she herself had wondered — wondered at the multiform changes of each swell as it came in — transformations of tint, of shape, of motion, that seemed to betoken a life infinitely more subtle than the strange cold life of lizards and of fishes — and sinister, and spectral. Then they all appeared to move in order — according to one law or impulse; — each had its own voice, yet all sang one and the same everlasting song. Vaguely, as she watched them and listened to them, there came to her the idea of a unity of *will* in their motion, a unity of *menace* in their utterance — the idea of one monstrous and complex life! The sea *lived:* it could crawl backward and forward; it could speak! — it only feigned deafness and sightlessness for some malevolent end.

Thenceforward she feared to find herself alone with it. Was it not at her that it strove to rush, muttering, and showing its white teeth . . . just because it knew that she was all by herself? . . . Si quieres aprender á orar, entra en el mar! And Concha had well learned to pray. But the sea seemed to her the one Power which God could not make to obey Him as He pleased. Saying the creed one day, she repeated very slowly the opening words, "Creo en un Dios, padre todopoderoso, Criador del cielo y de la tierra" — and paused and thought. *Creator of Heaven and Earth?* "Madrecita Carmen," she asked — "quien entonces hizó el mar?" (who then made the sea?)

"Dios, mi querida," answered Carmen. "God, my darling. . . . All things were made by Him" (todas las cosas fueron hechas por Él).

Even the wicked Sea! And He had said unto it: "Thus far, and no farther." . . . Was that why it had not overtaken and devoured her when she ran back in fear from the sudden reaching out of its waves? *Thus far* . . .? But there were times when it disobeyed — when it rushed further, shaking the world! Was it because God was then asleep — could not hear, did not see, until too late?

And the tumultuous ocean terrified her more and more: it filled her sleep with enormous nightmare; — it came upon her in dreams, mountain-shadowing — holding her with its spell, smothering her power of outcry, heaping itself to the stars.

Carmen became alarmed; — she feared that the nervous and delicate child might die in one of those moaning dreams out of which she had to arouse her, night after night. But Feliu, answering her anxiety with one of his favorite proverbs, suggested a heroic remedy:

"The world is like the sea: those who do not know how to swim in it are drowned; — and the sea is like the world," he added. . . . "Chita must learn to swim!"

And he found the time to teach her. Each morning, at sunrise, he took her into the water. She was less terrified the first time than Carmen thought she would be; — she seemed to feel confidence in Feliu; although she screamed piteously before her first ducking at his hands. His teaching was not gentle. He would carry her out, perched upon his shoulder, until the water rose to his own neck; and there he would throw her from him, and let her struggle to reach him again as best she could. The first few mornings she had to be pulled out almost at once; but after that Feliu showed her less mercy, and helped her only when he saw she was really in danger. He attempted no other instruction until she had learned that in order to save herself from being half choked by the salt water, she must not scream; and by the time she became habituated to these austere experiences, she had already learned by instinct alone how to keep herself afloat for a while, how to paddle a little with her hands. Then

he commenced to train her to use them — to lift them well out and throw them forward as if reaching, to dip them as the blade of an oar is dipped at an angle, without loud splashing; — and he showed her also how to use her feet. She learned rapidly and astonishingly well. In less than two months Feliu felt really proud at the progress made by his tiny pupil: it was a delight to watch her lifting her slender arms above the water in swift, easy curves, with the same fine grace that marked all her other natural motions. Later on he taught her not to fear the sea even when it growled a little — how to ride a swell, how to face a breaker, how to dive. She only needed practice thereafter; and Carmen, who could also swim, finding the child's health improving marvelously under this new discipline, took good care that Chita should practice whenever the mornings were not too cold, or the water too rough.

With the first thrill of delight at finding herself able to glide over the water unassisted, the child's superstitious terror of the sea passed away. Even for the adult there are few physical joys keener than the exultation of the swimmer; — how much greater the same glee as newly felt by an imaginative child — a child, whose vivid fancy can lend unutterable value to the most insignificant trifles, can transform a weed-patch to an Eden! . . . Of her own accord she would ask for her morning bath, as soon as she opened her eyes; — it even required some severity to prevent her from remaining in the water too long.

The sea appeared to her as something that had become tame for her sake, something that loved her in a huge rough way; a tremendous playmate, whom she no longer feared to see come bounding and barking to lick her feet. And, little by little, she also learned the wonderful healing and caressing power of the monster, whose cool embrace at once dispelled all drowsiness, feverishness, weariness — even after the sultriest nights when the air had seemed to burn, and the mosquitoes had filled the chamber with a sound as of water boiling in many kettles. And on mornings when the sea was in too wicked a humor to be played with, how she felt the loss of her loved sport, and prayed for calm! Her delicate constitution changed; — the soft, pale flesh became firm and brown, the meagre limbs rounded into robust symmetry, the thin cheeks grew peachy with richer life; for the strength of the sea had entered into her; the sharp breath of the sea had renewed and brightened her young blood. . . .

. . . Thou primordial Sea, the awfulness of whose antiquity hath stricken all mythology dumb; — thou most wrinkled living Sea, the millions of whose years outnumber even the multitude of thy hoary motions; — thou omniform and most mysterious Sea, mother of the monsters and the gods — whence thine eternal youth? Still do thy waters hold the infinite thrill of that Spirit which brooded above their face in the Beginning! — still is thy quickening breath an elixir unto them that flee to thee for life — like the

breath of young girls, like the breath of children, prescribed for the senescent by magicians of old — prescribed unto weazened elders in the books of the Wizards.

III

. . . EIGHTEEN hundred and sixty-seven; — midsummer in the pest-smitten city of New Orleans.

Heat motionless and ponderous. The steel-blue of the sky bleached from the furnace-circle of the horizon; — the lukewarm river ran yellow and noiseless as a torrent of fluid wax. Even sounds seemed blunted by the heaviness of the air; — the rumbling of wheels, the reverberation of footsteps, fell half-toned upon the ear, like sounds that visit a dozing brain.

Daily, almost at the same hour, the continuous sense of atmospheric oppression became thickened; — a packed herd of low-bellying clouds lumbered up from the Gulf; crowded blackly against the sun; flickered, thundered, and burst in torrential rain — tepid, perpendicular — and vanished utterly away. Then, more furiously than before, the sun flamed down; — roofs and pavements steamed; the streets seemed to smoke; the air grew suffocating with vapor; and the luminous city filled with a faint, sickly odor — a stale smell, as of dead leaves suddenly disinterred from wet mould — as of grasses decomposing after a flood. Something saffron speckled the slimy water of the gutters; sulphur

some called it; others feared even to give it a name! Was it only the wind-blown pollen of some innocuous plant? I do not know; but to many it seemed as if the Invisible Destruction were scattering visible seed! . . . Such were the days; and each day the terror-stricken city offered up its hecatomb to death; and the faces of all the dead were yellow as flame!

"DÉCÉDÉ —"; "DÉCÉDÉE —"; "FALLECIO"; — "DIED." . . . On the doorposts, the telegraph-poles, the pillars of verandas, the lamps — over the Government letter-boxes — everywhere glimmered the white annunciations of death. All the city was spotted with them. And lime was poured into the gutters; and huge purifying fires were kindled after sunset.

The nights began wth a black heat; — there were hours when the acrid air seemed to ferment for stagnation, and to burn the bronchial tubing; — then, toward morning, it would grow chill with venomous vapors, with morbific dews — till the sun came up to lift the torpid moisture, and to fill the buildings with oven-glow. And the interminable procession of mourners and hearses and carriages again began to circulate between the centres of life and of death; — and long trains and steamships rushed from the port, with heavy burden of fugitives.

Wealth might flee; yet even in flight there was peril. Men, who might have been saved by the craft of experienced nurses at home, hurriedly departed in apparent health, unconsciously carrying

in their blood the toxic principle of a malady unfamiliar to physicians of the West and North; — and they died upon their way, by the road-side, by the river-banks, in woods, in deserted stations, on the cots of quarantine hospitals. Wiser those who sought refuge in the purity of the pine forests, or in those near Gulf Islands, whence the bright sea-breath kept ever sweeping back the expanding poison into the funereal swamps, into the misty lowlands. The watering-resorts became overcrowded; — then the fishing villages were thronged — at least all which were easy to reach by steamboat or by lugger. And at last, even Viosca's Point — remote and unfamiliar as it was — had a stranger to shelter: a good old gentleman named Edwards, rather broken down in health — who came as much for quiet as for sea-air, and who had been warmly recommended to Feliu by Captain Harris. For some years he had been troubled by a disease of the heart.

Certainly the old invalid could not have found a more suitable place so far as rest and quiet were concerned. The season had early given such little promise that several men of the Point betook themselves elsewhere; and the aged visitor had two or three vacant cabins from among which to select a dwelling-place. He chose to occupy the most remote of all, which Carmen furnished for him with a cool moss bed and some necessary furniture — including a big wooden rocking-chair. It seemed to him very comfortable thus. He took his meals with the fam-

ily, spent most of the day in his own quarters, spoke very little, and lived so unobtrusively and inconspicuously that his presence in the settlement was felt scarcely more than that of some dumb creature — some domestic animal — some humble pet whose relation to the family is only fully comprehended after it has failed to appear for several days in its accustomed place of patient waiting — and we know that it is dead.

IV

PERSISTENTLY and furiously, at half-past two o'clock of an August morning, Sparicio rang Dr. La Brierre's night-bell. He had fifty dollars in his pocket, and a letter to deliver. He was to earn another fifty dollars — deposited in Feliu's hands — by bringing the Doctor to Viosca's Point. He had risked his life for that money — and was terribly in earnest.

Julien descended in his under-clothing, and opened the letter by the light of the hall lamp. It enclosed a check for a larger fee than he had ever before received, and contained an urgent request that he would at once accompany Sparicio to Viosca's Point — as the sender was in hourly danger of death. The letter, penned in a long, quavering hand, was signed — "*Henry Edwards.*"

His father's dear old friend! Julien could not refuse to go — though he feared it was a hopeless case. *Angina pectoris* — and a third attack at sev-

enty years of age! Would it even be possible to reach the sufferer's bedside in time? "Duè giorno — con vento" — said Sparicio. Still, he must go; and at once. It was Friday morning; — might reach the Point Saturday night, with a good wind. . . . He roused his housekeeper, gave all needful instructions, prepared his little medicine-chest; — and long before the first rose-gold fire of day had flashed to the city spires, he was sleeping the sleep of exhaustion in the tiny cabin of a fishing-sloop.

. . . For eleven years Julien had devoted himself, heart and soul, to the exercise of that profession he had first studied rather as a polite accomplishment than as a future calling. In the unselfish pursuit of duty he had found the only possible consolation for his irreparable loss; and when the war came to sweep away his wealth, he entered the struggle valorously, not to strive against men, but to use his science against death. After the passing of that huge shock, which left all the imposing and splendid fabric of Southern feudalism wrecked forever, his profession stood him in good stead; — he found himself not only able to supply those personal wants he cared to satisfy, but also to alleviate the misery of many whom he had known in days of opulence; — the princely misery that never doffed its smiling mask, though living in secret, from week to week, on bread and orange-leaf tea; — the misery that affected condescension in accepting an invitation to dine — staring at the face of a watch (refused by the

Mont-de-Piété) with eyes half blinded by starvation; — the misery which could afford but one robe for three marriageable daughters — one plain dress to be worn in turn by each of them, on visiting days; — the pretty misery — young, brave, sweet — asking for a "treat" of cakes too jocosely to have its asking answered — laughing and coquetting with its well-fed wooers, and crying for hunger after they were gone. Often and often, his heart had pleaded against his purse for such as these, and won its case in the silent courts of Self. But ever mysteriously the gift came — sometimes as if from the hand of a former slave; sometimes as from a remorseful creditor, ashamed to write his name. Only yellow Victorine knew; but the Doctor's housekeeper never opened those sphinx-lips of hers, until years after the Doctor's name had disappeared from the City Directory. . . .

He had grown quite thin — a little gray. The epidemic had burthened him with responsibilities too multifarious and ponderous for his slender strength to bear. The continual nervous strain of abnormally protracted duty, the perpetual interruption of sleep, had almost prostrated even his will. Now he only hoped that, during this brief absence from the city, he might find renewed strength to do his terrible task.

Mosquitoes bit savagely; and the heat became thicker; — and there was yet no wind. Sparicio and his hired boy Carmelo had been walking backward

and forward for hours overhead — urging the vessel yard by yard, with long poles, through the slime of canals and bayous. With every heavy push, the weary boy would sigh out — "Santo Antonio! — Santo Antonio!" Sullen Sparicio himself at last burst into vociferations of ill-humor: "Santo Antonio? — Ah! santissimu e santu diavulu! . . . Sacramentu pœscite vegnu un asidente! — malidittu lu Signuri!" All through the morning they walked and pushed, trudged and sighed and swore; and the minutes dragged by more wearily than the shuffling of their feet. "Managgia Cristo co tutta a croce!" . . . "Santissimu e santu diavulu!!" . . .

But as they reached at last the first of the broad bright lakes, the heat lifted, the breeze leaped up, the loose sail flapped and filled; and, bending graciously as a skater, the old San Marco began to shoot in a straight line over the blue flood. Then, while the boy sat at the tiller, Sparicio lighted his tiny charcoal furnace below, and prepared a simple meal — delicious yellow macaroni, flavored with goats' cheese; some fried fish, that smelled appetizingly; and rich black coffee, of Oriental fragrance and thickness. Julien ate a little, and lay down to sleep again. This time his rest was undisturbed by the mosquitoes; and when he woke, in the cooling evening, he felt almost refreshed. The San Marco was flying into Barataria Bay. Already the lantern in the lighthouse tower had begun to glow like a little moon; and right on the rim of the sea, a vast and

vermilion sun seemed to rest his chin. Gray pelicans came flapping around the mast; — sea-birds sped hurtling by, their white bosoms rose-flushed by the western glow. . . . Again Sparicio's little furnace was at work — more fish, more macaroni, more black coffee; also a square-shouldered bottle of gin made its appearance. Julien ate less sparingly at this second meal; and smoked a long time on deck with Sparicio, who suddenly became very good-humored, and chatted volubly in bad Spanish, and in much worse English. Then while the boy took a few hours' sleep, the Doctor helped delightedly in maneuvering the little vessel. He had been a good yachtsman in other years; and Sparicio declared he would make a good fisherman. By midnight the San Marco began to run with a long, swinging gait; — she had reached deep water. Julien slept soundly; the steady rocking of the sloop seemed to soothe his nerves.

"After all," he thought to himself, as he rose from his little bunk next morning — "something like this is just what I needed." . . . The pleasant scent of hot coffee greeted him; — Carmelo was handing him the tin cup containing it, down through the hatchway. After drinking it he felt really hungry; — he ate more macaroni than he had ever eaten before. Then, while Sparicio slept, he aided Carmelo; and during the middle of the day he rested again. He had not had so much uninterrupted repose for many a week. He fancied he could feel himself getting strong. At supper-time it seemed to him he

could not get enough to eat — although there was plenty for everybody.

All day long there had been exactly the same wave-crease distorting the white shadow of the San Marco's sail upon the blue water; — all day long they had been skimming over the liquid level of a world so jewel-blue that the low green ribbon-strips of marsh land, the far-off fleeing lines of pine-yellow sand beach, seemed flaws or breaks in the perfected color of the universe; — all day long had the cloudless sky revealed through all its exquisite transparency that inexpressible tenderness which no painter and no poet can ever re-image — that unutterable sweetness which no art of man may ever shadow forth, and which none may ever comprehend — though we feel it to be in some strange way akin to the luminous and unspeakable charm that makes us wonder at the eyes of a woman when she loves.

Evening came; and the great dominant celestial tone deepened; — the circling horizon filled with ghostly tints — spectral greens and grays, and pearl-lights and fish-colors. . . . Carmelo, as he crouched at the tiller, was singing, in a low, clear alto, some tristful little melody. Over the sea, behind them, lay, black-stretching, a long low arm of island-shore; — before them flamed the splendor of sun-death; they were sailing into a mighty glory — into a vast and awful light of gold.

Shading his vision with his fingers, Sparicio

pointed to the long lean limb of land from which they were fleeing, and said to La Brierre:

"Look-a, Doct-a! Last-a Islan'!"

Julien knew it; — he only nodded his head in reply, and looked the other way — into the glory of God. Then, wishing to divert the fisherman's attention to another theme, he asked what was Carmelo singing. Sparicio at once shouted to the lad:

"Ha! . . . ho! Carmelo! — Santu diavulu! . . . Sing-a loud-a! Doct-a lik-a! Sing-a! sing!!" . . . "He sing-a nicee" — added the boatman, with his peculiar dark smile. And then Carmelo sang, loud and clearly, the song he had been singing before — one of those artless Mediterranean ballads, full of caressing vowel-sounds, and young passion, and melancholy beauty:

M' ama ancor, beltà fulgente,
  Come tu m' amasti allor; —
Ascoltar non dei gente,
  Solo interroga il tuo cor. . . .

"He sing-a nicee — mucha bueno!" murmured the fisherman. And then, suddenly — with a rich and splendid basso that seemed to thrill every fibre of the planking — Sparicio joined in the song:

M' ama pur d' amore eterno,
  Nè delitto sembri a te;
T' assicuro che l' inferno
  Una favola sol è. . . .

All the roughness of the man was gone! To Julien's startled fancy, the fishers had ceased to be; — lo!

Carmelo was a princely page; Sparicio, a king! How perfectly their voices married together! — they sang with passion, with power, with truth, with that wondrous natural art which is the birthright of the rudest Italian soul. And the stars throbbed out in the heaven; and the glory died in the west; and the night opened its heart; and the splendor of the eternities fell all about them. Still they sang; and the San Marco sped on through the soft gloom, ever slightly swerved by the steady blowing of the south-east wind in her sail; — always wearing the same crimpling-frill of wave-spray about her prow — always accompanied by the same smooth-backed swells — always spinning out behind her the same long trail of interwoven foam. And Julien looked up. Ever the night thrilled more and more with silent twinklings; — more and more multitudinously lights pointed in the eternities; — the Evening Star quivered like a great drop of liquid white fire ready to fall; — Vega flamed as a pharos lighting the courses ethereal — to guide the sailing of the suns, and the swarming of fleets of worlds. Then the vast sweetness of that violet night entered into his blood — filled him with that awful joy, so near akin to sadness, which the sense of the Infinite brings — when one feels the poetry of the Most Ancient and Most Excellent of Poets, and then is smitten at once with the contrast-thought of the sickliness and selfishness of Man — of the blindness and brutality of cities, whereinto the divine blue light never purely comes,

and the sanctification of the Silences never descends . . . furious cities, walled away from heaven. . . . Oh! if one could only sail on thus always, always through such a night — through such a star-sprinkled violet night, and hear Sparicio and Carmelo sing, even though it were the same melody always, always the same song!

. . . "Scuza, Doct-a! — look-a out!" Julien bent down, as the big boom, loosened, swung over his head. The San Marco was rounding into shore — heading for her home. Sparicio lifted a huge conch-shell from the deck, put it to his lips, filled his deep lungs, and flung out into the night — thrice — a profound, mellifluent, booming horn-tone. A minute passed. Then, ghostly faint, as an echo from very far away, a triple blowing responded. . . .

And a long purple mass loomed and swelled into sight, heightened, approached — land and trees black-shadowing, and lights that swung. . . . The San Marco glided into a bayou — under a high wharfing of timbers, where a bearded fisherman waited, and a woman. Sparicio flung up a rope.

The bearded man caught it by the lantern-light, and tethered the San Marco to her place. Then he asked, in a deep voice:

"Has traido al Doctor?"

"Si, si!" answered Sparicio. . . . "Y el viejo?"

"Aye! pobre!" responded Feliu — "hace tres dias que esta muerto."

Henry Edwards was dead!

He had died very suddenly, without a cry or a word, while resting in his rocking-chair — the very day after Sparicio had sailed. They had made him a grave in the marsh — among the high weeds, not far from the ruined tomb of the Spanish fisherman. But Sparicio had fairly earned his hundred dollars.

V

So there was nothing to do at Viosca's Point except to rest. Feliu and all his men were going to Barataria in the morning on business; — the Doctor could accompany them there, and take the Grand Island steamer Monday for New Orleans. With this intention Julien retired — not sorry for being able to stretch himself at full length on the good bed prepared for him, in one of the unoccupied cabins. But he woke before day with a feeling of intense prostration, a violent headache, and such an aversion for the mere idea of food that Felui's invitation to breakfast at five o'clock gave him an internal qualm. Perhaps a touch of malaria. In any case he felt it would be both dangerous and useless to return to town unwell; and Felui, observing his condition, himself advised against the journey. Wednesday he would have another opportunity to leave; and in the meanwhile Carmen would take good care of him. . . . The boats departed, and Julien slept again.

The sun was high when he rose up and dressed himself, feeling no better. He would have liked to

walk about the place, but felt nervously afraid of the sun. He did not remember having ever felt so broken down before. He pulled a rocking-chair to the window, tried to smoke a cigar. It commenced to make him feel still sicker, and he flung it away. It seemed to him the cabin was swaying, as the San Marco swayed when she first reached the deep water.

A light rustling sound approached — a sound of quick feet treading the grass: then a shadow slanted over the threshold. In the glow of the open doorway stood a young girl — gracile, tall — with singularly splendid eyes — brown eyes peeping at him from beneath a golden riot of loose hair.

"M'sieu-le-Docteur, maman d'mande si vous n'avez bisoin d'que'que chose?" . . . She spoke the rude French of the fishing villages, where the language lives chiefly as a baragouin, mingled often with words and forms belonging to many other tongues. She wore a loose-falling dress of some light stuff, steel-gray in color; — boys' shoes were on her feet.

He did not reply; — and her large eyes grew larger for wonder at the strange fixed gaze of the physician, whose face had visibly bleached — blanched to corpse-pallor. Silent seconds passed; and still the eyes stared — flamed as if the life of the man had centralized and focussed within them.

His voice had risen to a cry in his throat, quivered and swelled one passionate instant, and failed — as in a dream when one strives to call, and yet can only moan. . . . *She!* Her unforgotten eyes, her brows,

her lips! — the oval of her face! — the dawn-light of her hair! . . . Adèle's own poise — her own grace! — even the very turn of her neck — even the bird-tone of her speech! . . . Had the grave sent forth a Shadow to haunt him? — could the perfidious Sea have yielded up its dead? For one terrible fraction of a minute, memories, doubts, fears, mad fancies, went pulsing through his brain with a rush like the rhythmic throbbing of an electric stream; — then the shock passed, the Reason spoke: "Fool! — count the long years since you first saw her thus! — count the years that have gone since you looked upon her last! And Time has never halted, silly heart! — neither has Death stood still!"

. . . "Plait-il?" — the clear voice of the young girl asked. She thought he had made some response she could not distinctly hear.

Mastering himself an instant, as the heart faltered back to its duty, and the color remounted to his lips, he answered her in French:

"Pardon me! — I did not hear . . . you gave me such a start!" . . . But even then another extraordinary fancy flashed through his thought; — and with the tutoiement of a parent to a child, with an irresistible outburst of such tenderness as almost frightened her, he cried: "Oh! merciful God! — how like her! . . . Tell me, darling, your name; — tell me who you are?" (Dis-moi qui tu es, mignonne; — dis-moi ton nom.)

. . . Who was it had asked her the same question,

in another idiom — ever so long ago? The man with the black eyes and nose like an eagle's beak — the one who gave her the compass. Not *this* man — no!

She answered, with the timid gravity of surprise: "Chita Viosca."

He still watched her face, and repeated the name slowly — reiterated it in a tone of wonderment: "Chita Viosca? — Chita Viosca!"

"C'est à dire . . . " she said, looking down at her feet — "Concha — Conchita." His strange solemnity made her smile — the smile of shyness that knows not what else to do. But it was the smile of dead Adèle.

"Thanks, my child," he exclaimed of a sudden — in a quick, hoarse, changed tone. (He felt that his emotion would break loose in some wild way, if he looked upon her longer.) "I would like to see your mother this evening; but I now feel too ill to go out. I am going to try to rest a little."

"Nothing I can bring you?" She asked; — "some fresh milk?"

"Nothing now, dear: if I need anything later, I will tell your mother when she comes."

"Mamma does not understand French very well."

"No importa, Conchita; — le hablaré en Español."

"Bien, entonces!" she responded, with the same exquisite smile. "Adios, señor!" . . .

But as she turned in going, his piercing eye discerned a little brown speck below the pretty lobe of her right ear — just in the peachy curve between

neck and cheek. . . . His own little Zouzoune had a birthmark like that! — he remembered the faint pink trace left by his fingers above and below it the day he had slapped her for overturning his ink-bottle. . . . "To laimin moin? — to batté moin!"

"Chita! — Chita!"

She did not hear. . . . After all, what a mistake he might have made! Were not Nature's coincidences more wonderful than fiction? Better to wait — to question the mother first, and thus make sure.

Still — there were so many coincidences! The face, the smile, the eyes, the voice, the whole charm; — then that mark — and the fair hair. Zouzoune had always resembled Adèle so strangely! That golden hair was a Scandinavian bequest to the Florane family; — the tall daughter of a Norwegian sea-captain had once become the wife of a Florane. Viosca? — who ever knew a Viosca with such hair? Yet again, these Spanish emigrants sometimes married blonde German girls. . . . Might be a case of atavism, too. Who was this Viosca? If that was his wife — the little brown Carmen — whence Chita's sunny hair? . . .

And this was part of that same desolate shore whither the Last Island dead had been drifted by that tremendous surge! On a clear day, with a good glass, one might discern from here the long blue streak of that ghastly coast. . . . Somewhere — between here and there. . . . Merciful God! . . .

. . . But again! That bivouac-night before the

fight at Chancellorsville, Laroussel had begun to tell him such a singular story. . . . Chance had brought them — the old enemies — together; made them dear friends in the face of Death. How little he had comprehended the man! — what a brave, true, simple soul went up that day to the Lord of Battles! . . . What was it — that story about the little Creole girl saved from Last Island — that story which was never finished? . . . Eh! what a pain!

Evidently he had worked too much, slept too little. A decided case of nervous prostration. He must lie down, and try to sleep. These pains in the head and back were becoming unbearable. Nothing but rest could avail him now.

He stretched himself under the mosquito curtain. It was very still, breathless, hot! The venomous insects were thick; — they filled the room with a continuous ebullient sound, as if invisible kettles were boiling overhead. A sign of storm. . . . Still, it was strange! — he could not perspire. . . .

Then it seemed to him that Laroussel was bending over him — Laroussel in his cavalry uniform. "Bonjour, camarade! — nous allons avoir un bien mauvais temps, mon pauvre Julien." How! bad weather? — "Comment un mauvais temps?" . . . He looked in Laroussel's face. There was something so singular in his smile. Ah! yes — he remembered now: it was the wound! . . . "Un vilain temps!" whispered Laroussel. Then he was gone. . . . Whither?

"Chéri!" . . .

The whisper roused him with a fearful start. . . . Adèle's whisper! So she was wont to rouse him sometimes in the old sweet nights — to crave some little attention for ailing Eulalie — to make some little confidence she had forgotten to utter during the happy evening. . . . No, no! It was only the trees. The sky was clouding over. The wind was rising. . . . How his heart beat! how his temples pulsed! Why, this was fever! Such pains in the back and head!

Still his skin was dry — dry as parchment — burning. He rose up; and a bursting weight of pain at the base of the skull made him reel like a drunken man. He staggered to the little mirror nailed upon the wall, and looked. How his eyes glowed; — and there was blood in his mouth! He felt his pulse — spasmodic, terribly rapid. Could it possibly —? . . . No: this must be some pernicious malarial fever! The Creole does not easily fall a prey to the great tropical malady — unless after a long absence in other climates. True! he had been four years in the army! But this was 1867. . . . He hesitated a moment; then — opening his medicine-chest, he measured out and swallowed thirty grains of quinine.

Then he lay down again. His head pained more and more; — it seemed as if the cervical vertebræ were filled with fluid iron. And still his skin remained dry as if tanned. Then the anguish grew so intense as to force a groan with almost every aspira-

tion. . . . Nausea — and the stinging bitterness of quinine rising in his throat; — dizziness, and a brutal wrenching within his stomach. Everything began to look pink; — the light was rose-colored. It darkened more — kindled with deepening tint. Something kept sparkling and spinning before his sight, like a firework. . . . Then a burst of blood mixed with chemical bitterness filled his mouth; the light became scarlet as claret. . . . This — this was . . . not malaria. . . .

VI

. . . CARMEN knew what it was; but the brave little woman was not afraid of it. Many a time before she had met it face to face, in Havanese summers; she knew how to wrestle with it; — she had torn Feliu's life away from its yellow clutch, after one of those long struggles that strain even the strength of love. Now she feared mostly for Chita. She had ordered the girl under no circumstances to approach the cabin.

Julien felt that blankets had been heaped upon him — that some gentle hand was bathing his scorching face with vinegar and water. Vaguely also there came to him the idea that it was night. He saw the shadow-shape of a woman moving against the red light upon the wall; — he saw there was a lamp burning.

Then the delirium seized him: he moaned, sobbed, cried like a child — talked wildly at intervals in French, in English, in Spanish.

"Mentira! — you could not be her mother. . . . Still, if you were — And she must not come in here — jamas! . . . Carmen, did you know Adèle — Adèle Florane? So like her — so like — God only knows how like! . . . Perhaps I think I know; — but I do not — do not know justly, fully — how like! . . . Si! si! — es el vómito! — yo lo conozco, Carmen! . . . She must not die twice. . . . I died twice. . . . I am going to die again. She only once. Till the heavens be no more she will not rise. . . . Moi, au contraire, il faut que je me lève toujours! They need me so much; — the slate is always full; the bell will never stop. They will ring that bell for me when I am dead. . . . So will I rise again! — resurgam! . . . How could I save him? — could not save myself. It was a bad case — at seventy years! . . . There! Qui çà?" . . .

He saw Laroussel again — reaching out a hand to him through a whirl of red smoke. He tried to grasp it, and could not. . . . "N'importe, mon ami," said Laroussel — "tu vas la voir bientôt." Who was he to see soon? — "qui donc, Laroussel?" But Laroussel did not answer. Through the red mist he seemed to smile; — then passed.

For some hours Carmen had trusted she could save her patient — desperate as the case appeared to be. His was one of those rapid and violent attacks, such as often despatch their victims in a single day. In the Cuban hospitals she had seen many and

many terrible examples: strong young men — soldiers fresh from Spain — carried panting to the fever wards at sunrise; carried to the cemeteries at sunset. Even troopers riddled with revolutionary bullets had lingered longer. . . . Still, she had believed she might save Julien's life: the burning forehead once began to bead, the burning hands grew moist.

But now the wind was moaning; — the air had become lighter, thinner, cooler. A storm was gathering in the east; and to the fever-stricken man the change meant death. . . . Impossible to bring the priest of the Caminada now; and there was no other within a day's sail. She could only pray; she had lost all hope in her own power to save.

Still the sick man raved; but he talked to himself at longer intervals, and with longer pauses between his words; — his voice was growing more feeble, his speech more incoherent. His thought vacillated and distorted, like flame in a wind.

Weirdly the past became confounded with the present; impressions of sight and of sound interlinked in fantastic affinity — the face of Chita Viosca, the murmur of the rising storm. Then flickers of spectral lightning passed through his eyes, through his brain, with every throb of the burning arteries; then utter darkness came — a darkness that surged and moaned, as the circumfluence of a shadowed sea. And through and over the moaning pealed one multitudinous human cry,

one hideous interblending of shoutings and shriekings. . . . A woman's hand was locked in his own. . . . "Tighter," he muttered, "tighter still, darling! hold as long as you can!" It was the tenth night of August, eighteen hundred and fifty-six. . . .

"Chéri!" . . .

Again the mysterious whisper startled him to consciousness — the dim knowledge of a room filled with ruby-colored light — and the sharp odor of vinegar. The house swung round slowly; — the crimson flame of the lamp lengthened and broadened by turns; — then everything turned dizzily fast — whirled as if spinning in a vortex. . . . Nausea unutterable; and a frightful anguish as of teeth devouring him within — tearing more and more furiously at his breast. Then one atrocious wrenching, rending, burning — and the gush of blood burst from lips and nostrils in a smothering deluge. Again the vision of lightnings, the swaying, and the darkness of long ago. "Quick! — quick! — hold fast to the table, Adèle! — never let go!" . . .

. . . Up — up — up! — what! higher yet? Up to the red sky! Red — black-red . . . heated iron when its vermilion dies. So, too, the frightful flood! And noiseless. Noiseless because heavy, clammy — thick, warm, sickening . . . blood? Well might the land quake for the weight of such a tide! . . . Why did Adèle speak Spanish? Who prayed for him? . . .

"Alma de Cristo santísima santifícame!

"Sangre de Cristo, embriágame!
"O buen Jesus, oye me!" . . .

Out of the darkness into — such a light! An azure haze! Ah! — the delicious frost! . . . All the streets were filled with the sweet blue mist. . . . Voiceless the City and white; — crooked and weed-grown its narrow ways! . . . Old streets of tombs, these. . . . Eh! how odd a custom! — a night-bell at every door. Yes, of course! — a *night*-bell! — the Dead are Physicians of Souls: they may be summoned only by night — called up from the darkness and silence. . . . Yet *she?* — might he not dare to ring for her even by day? . . . Strange he had deemed it day! — why, it was black, starless. . . . And it was growing queerly cold. . . . How should he ever find her now? It was so black . . . so cold! . . .

"Chéri!"

All the dwelling quivered with the mighty whisper.

Outside, the great oaks were trembling to their roots; — all the shore shook and blanched before the calling of the sea.

And Carmen, kneeling at the feet of the dead, cried out, alone in the night:

"O Jesus misericordioso! — tened compasion de él!"

YOUMA

THE STORY OF A WEST-INDIAN SLAVE

TO MY FRIEND

JOSEPH S. TUNISON

YOUMA

THE da, during old colonial days, often held high rank in rich Martinique households. The da was usually a Creole negress — more often, at all events, of the darker than of the lighter hue — more commonly a capresse than a mestive; but in her particular case the prejudice of color did not exist. The da was a slave; but no freedwoman, however beautiful or cultivated, could enjoy social privileges equal to those of certain das. The da was respected and loved as a mother: she was at once a foster-mother and nurse. For the Creole child had two mothers: the aristocratic white mother who gave him birth; the dark bond-mother who gave him all care — who nursed him, bathed him, taught him to speak the soft and musical speech of slaves, took him out in her arms to show him the beautiful tropic world, told him wonderful folk-stories of evenings, lulled him to sleep, attended to his every possible want by day or by night. It was not to be wondered at that during infancy the da should have been loved more than the white mother: when there was any marked preference it was nearly always in the da's favor. The child was much more with her than with his real mother: she alone satisfied all his little needs;

he found her more indulgent, more patient, perhaps even more caressing, than the other. The da was herself at heart a child, speaking a child-language, finding pleasure in childish things — artless, playful, affectionate; she comprehended the thoughts, the impulses, the pains, the faults of the little one as the white mother could not always have done: she knew intuitively how to soothe him upon all occasions, how to amuse him, how to excite and caress his imagination; — there was absolute harmony between their natures — a happy community of likes and dislikes — a perfect sympathy in the animal joy of being. Later on, when the child had become old enough to receive his first lessons from a tutor or governess, to learn to speak French, the affection for the da and the affection for the mother began to differentiate in accordance with mental expansion; but, though the mother might be more loved, the da was not less cherished than before. The love of the nurse lasted through life; and the relation of the da to the family seldom ceased — except in those cruel instances where she was only "hired" from another slave-holder.

In many cases the family da had been born upon the estate: — under the same roof she might serve as nurse for two generations. More often it would happen, that as the family multiplied and divided — as the sons and daughters, growing up, became themselves fathers and mothers — she would care for all their children in turn. She ended her days with

her masters: although she was legally property, it would have been deemed almost an infamy to sell her. When freed by gratitude — pour services rendus — she did not care to make a home of her own: freedom had small value for her except in the event of her outliving those to whom she was attached. She had children of her own, for whom she would have desired freedom rather than for herself, and for whom she might rightfully ask it, since she had sacrificed so much of her own maternal pleasures for the sake of others' children. She was unselfish and devoted to a degree which compelled gratitude even from natures of iron; — she represented the highest development of natural goodness possible in a race mentally undeveloped, kept half savage by subservience, but physically refined in a remarkable manner by climate, environment, and all those mysterious influences which form the characteristics of Creole peoples.

The da is already of the past. Her special type was a product of slavery, largely created by selection: the one creation of slavery perhaps not unworthy of regret — one strange flowering amid all the rank dark growths of that bitter soil. The atmosphere of freedom was not essentially fatal to the permanence of the type; but with freedom came many unlooked-for changes: a great industrial depression due to foreign rivalry and new discoveries — a commercial crisis, in brief — accompanied the establishment of universal suffrage, the subordina-

tion of the white element to the black by a political upheaval, and the total disintegration of the old social structure. The transformation was too violent for good results; the abuse of political powers too speedily and indiscriminately conferred, intensified the old hates and evolved new ones: the races drew forever apart when they needed each other most. Then the increasing difficulty of existence quickly developed egotism: generosity and prosperity departed together; Creole life shrank into narrower channels; and the character of all classes visibly hardened under pressure of necessities previously unknown.

. . . There are really no more das: there are now only gardiennes or bonnes — nurses who can seldom keep a place more than three months. The loyalty and simplicity of the da have become traditions: vain to seek for any parallels among the new generation of salaried domestics! But of those who used to be das, several survive, and still bear the name, which, once conferred, is retained through life as an honorific title. Some are yet to be seen in Saint Pierre. . . . There is a very fine house on the seaward side of the Grande Rue, for example, on whose marble door-step one may be observed almost every fine morning — a very aged negress, who loves the sun. That is Da Siyotte. Gentlemen of wealth and high position, merchants and judges, salute her as they pass by. You might see the men of the family — the gray old father and his handsome sons —

pause to chat a moment with her before going to their offices. You might see young ladies bend down and kiss her before taking their places in the carriage for a drive. You would find — could you linger long enough — that all visitors greet her with a smile, and a kindly query: "Coument ou yé, Da Siyotte?" . . . Woe to the stranger who should speak rudely to her, under the impression that she is only a servant! . . . "Si elle n'est qu'une domestique," said the master of the house, rebuking such a one — "alors vous n'êtes qu'un valet!" For to insult the da, is to insult the household. When she dies, she will have such a funeral as money alone could not obtain — a funeral of the première classe, attended by the richest and proudest of the city. There are planters who will ride that day twenty miles over the mornes to act as pall-bearers. There are ladies who rarely tread pavement, who seldom go out except in their own vehicles — but who will follow the coffin of that old negress on foot, in the hot sun, all the way to the Cimetière du Mouillage. And they will inter their da in the family vault, while the crowns of the great palms quiver to the bourdon.

I

THERE are old persons still living in Saint Pierre who remember Youma, a tall capresse, the property of Madame Léonie Peyronnette. The servant was better known than the mistress; — for Madame Peyronnette went out little after the loss of her husband, a wealthy merchant, who had left her in more than comfortable circumstances.

Youma was a pet slave, and also the godchild of Madame Peyronnette: it was not uncommon during the old régime for Creole ladies to become godmothers of little slaves. Douceline, the mother of Youma, had been purchased as a da for Madame Peyronnette's only child, Aimée — and had died when Aimée was nearly five years old. The two children were nearly the same age, and seemed much attached to each other: after Douceline's death, Madame Peyronnette resolved to bring up the little capresse as a playmate for her daughter.

The dispositions of the two children were noticeably different; and with their growth, the difference became more marked. Aimée was demonstrative and affectionate, sensitive and passionate — quick to veer from joy to grief, from tears to smiles. Youma, on the contrary, was almost taciturn, seldom betrayed emotion: she would play silently when Aimée screamed, and scarcely smile when Aimée laughed so violently as to frighten her mother. In

spite of these differences of organization, or perhaps because of them, the two got along together very well: they had never a serious quarrel, and were first separated only when Aimée, at the age of nine, was sent to a convent to receive an education more finished than it was thought that private teachers were capable of giving. Aimée's grief at parting from her playmate was not assuaged by the assurance that she would find at school nicer companions than a young capresse; — Youma, who had certainly more to lose by the change, remained outwardly calm — "était d'une conduite irréprochable," said Madame Peyronnette, too fine an observer to attribute the "irreproachable conduct" to insensibility.

The friends continued to see each other, however; for Madame Peyronnette drove to the convent in her carriage regularly every Sunday, always taking Youma with her; and Aimée seemed scarcely less delighted to see her former playmate than to see her mother. During the first summer vacation and the Christmas holidays, the companionship of childhood was naïvely resumed; and the mutual affection survived the subsequent natural change of relation: though nominally a bonne, who addressed Aimée as a mistress, Youma was treated almost as a foster-sister. And when Mademoiselle had finished her studies, the young slave-maid remained her confidante, and to some extent her companion. Youma had never learned to read and write; Madame

Peyronnette believed that to educate her would only make her dissatisfied with the scope of a destiny out of which no effort could elevate her; but the girl had a natural intelligence which compensated her lack of mental training in many respects: she knew what to do and how to speak upon all occasions. She had grown up into a superb woman — certainly the finest capresse of the arrondissement. Her tint was a clear deep red; — there was in her features a soft vague beauty — a something that suggested the indefinable face of the Sphinx, especially in profile; — her hair, though curly as a black fleece, was long and not uncomely; she was graceful, furthermore, and very tall. At fifteen she had seemed a woman; at eighteen she was taller by head and shoulders than her young mistress; and Mademoiselle Aimée, though not below the average stature, had to lift up her eyes, when they walked out together, to look into Youma's face. The young bonne was universally admired: she was one of those figures that a Martiniquais would point out with pride to a stranger as a type of the beauty of the mixed race. Even in slave days, the Creole did not refuse himself the pleasure of admiring in human skin those tones none fear to praise in bronze or gold: he frankly confessed them exquisite; — æsthetically, his "color prejudice" had no existence. There were few young whites, nevertheless, who would have presumed to tell their admiration to Youma: there was something in the eyes and the

serious manner of the young slave that protected her quite as much as the moral power of the family in which she had been brought up.

Madame Peyronnette was proud of her servant, and took pleasure in seeing her attired as handsomely as possible in the brilliant and graceful costume then worn by the women of color. In regard to dress, Youma had no reason to envy any of the freed class: she had all that a capresse could wish to wear, according to local ideas of color contrast — jupes of silk and of satin — robes-dézindes with head-dresses and foulards to match — azure with orange, red with violet, yellow with bright blue, green with rose. On particular occasions, such as the first communion of Aimée, the fête of madame, a ball, a wedding to which the family were invited, Youma's costume was magnificent. With her trailing jupe of orange satin attached just below the bosom, and exposing above it the laced and embroidered chemise, with half-sleeves leaving the braceleted arms bare, and fastened at the elbow with gold clasps (boutons-à-clous); — her neck-kerchief (mouchouè-en-lai) of canary yellow striped with green and blue; — her triple necklace of graven gold beads (collier-chou); — her flashing ear-pendants (zanneaux-à-clou), each a packet of thick gold cylinders interjoined; — her yellow-banded Madras turban, dazzling with jewelry — "trembling-pins," chainlets, quivering acorns of gold (broches-à-gland) — she might have posed to a painter for the Queen

of Sheba. There were various pretty presents from Aimée among Youma's ornaments; but the greater part of the jewelry had been purchased for her by Madame Peyronnette, in a series of New-Year gifts. Youma was denied no pleasure which it was thought she might reasonably wish for — except liberty.

Perhaps Youma had never given herself any trouble on the subject; but Madame Peyronnette had thought a good deal about it, and had made up her mind. Twice she refused the girl's liberty to Mademoiselle Aimée, in spite of earnest prayers and tears. The refusal was prompted by motives which Aimée was then too young fully to comprehend. Madame Peyronnette's real intention was that Youma should be enfranchised so soon as it could render her any happier to be free. For the time being, her slavery was a moral protection: it kept her legally under the control of those who loved her most; it guarded her against dangers she yet knew nothing of; — above all, it prevented the possibility of her forming a union not approved by her mistress. The godmother had plans of her own for the girl's future: she intended that Youma should one day marry a thrifty and industrious freedman — somebody able to make a good home for her, a shipwright, cabinet-maker, builder, master mechanic of some kind; — and in such an event she was to have her liberty — perhaps a small dowry besides. In the meanwhile she was certainly as happy as it was possible to make her.

. . . At nineteen Aimée made a love-match — marrying M. Louis Desrivières, a distant cousin, some ten years older. M. Desrivières had inherited a prosperous estate on the east coast; but, like many wealthy planters, passed the greater part of the year by preference in the city; and it was to his mother's residence in the Quartier du Fort that he led his young bride. Youma, in accordance with Aimée's wish, accompanied her to her new home. It was not so far from Madame Peyronnette's dwelling in the Grande Rue to the home of the Desrivières in the Rue de la Consolation that either the daughter or the goddaughter could find the separation painful.

. . . Thirteen months later, Youma, attired like some Oriental princess, carried to the baptismal font a baby girl, whose advent into the little colonial world was recorded in the Archives de la Marine — "Lucile-Aimée-Francillette-Marie, fille du sieur Raoul-Ernest-Louis Desrivières, et de dame Adélaïde-Hortense-Aimée Peyronnette." Then Youma became the da of little Mayotte. It is by the last of the names conferred at christening that the child is generally called and known — or, rather, by some Creole diminutive of that name. . . . The diminutive of Marie is Mayotte.

In both families Mayotte was thought to resemble her father more than her mother: she had his gray eyes, and brown hair — that bright hair which with children of the older colonial families darkens to

apparent black as they grow up. She gave promise of becoming pretty.

Another year passed, during which no happier household could have been found: then, with cruel suddenness, Aimée was taken away by death. She had gone out with her husband in an open carriage, for a drive on the beautiful mountain-route called La Trace; leaving Youma with the child at home. On their return journey, one of those chilly and torrential rains which at certain seasons accompany an unexpected storm, overtook them when far from any place of shelter, and in the middle of an afternoon that had been unusually warm. Both were drenched in a moment; and a strong northeast wind, springing up, blew full upon them the whole way home. The young wife, naturally delicate, was attacked with pleurisy; and in spite of all possible aid, expired before the next sunrise.

And Youma robed her for the last time, tenderly and deftly as she had robed her for her first ball in pale blue, and for her wedding day all in vapory white. Only now, Aimée was robed all in black, as dead Creole mothers are.

M. Desrivières had loved his young wife passionately: he had married with a fresh heart, and a character little hardened by contact with the rougher side of existence. The trial was a terrible one; — for a time it was feared that he could not survive it. When he began at last to recover from the serious

illness caused by his grief, he found it impossible to linger in his home, with its memories: he went as soon as possible to his plantation, and tried to busy himself there, making from time to time brief visits to the city to see his child, whom Madame Peyronnette insisted on caring for. But Mayotte proved delicate, like her mother; and during a season of epidemic, some six months later, Madame Peyronnette decided that it would be better to send her to the country, to her father, in charge of Youma. Anse-Marine was known to be one of the healthiest places in the colony; and the child began to gain strength there, as the sensitive-plant — zhèbe-mamisé — toughens in the warm sea-wind. .

II

It is a long ride from Saint Pierre over the mountains to the plantation of Anse-Marine — formerly owned by the Desrivières; but the fatigue of six hours in the saddle under a tropic sun is not likely to be felt by one susceptible to those marvelous beauties in which the route abounds. Sometimes it rises almost to those white clouds that nearly always veil the heads of the great peaks; — sometimes it slopes down through the green twilight of primitive forests; — sometimes it overlooks vast depths of valley walled in by mountains of strange shapes and tints; — sometimes it winds over undulations of cane-covered land, beyond whose yellow limit appears the vapory curve of an almost purple sea.

Perhaps, for hours together, you see no motion but that of leaves and their shadows — hear only the sound of your horse's hoofs, or the papery rustling of cane waved by the wind — or, from the verge of some green chasm veiled by tree-ferns, the long low flute-call of an unknown bird. But, sooner or later, at a turn of the way, you come upon something of more human interest — some living incident full of exotic charm: such as a caravan of young colored girls, barefooted and bare-armed, transporting on their heads to market the produce of a cacaoyère; or a negro running by under an amazing load of bread-fruits or régimes-bananes.

Perhaps you may meet a troop of black men drawing to the coast upon a diabe or "devil" — which is a low strong vehicle with screaming axles — a gommier already hollowed out and shapen for a canoe: those behind pushing, and those before pulling all together, while a drummer beats his ka on the bottom of the unfinished boat, to the measure of their song: "Bom! ti canot! — allé châché! — méné vini! — Bom! ti canot!" . . .

Or perhaps you encounter a band of woodmen, sawing into planks by the roadside some newly felled tree, with a core yellow as saffron, or vermilion-red — a tree of which you do not know the name. It has been lifted upon a strong timber framework; and three men wield the long saw — one above, two below — all with their shirts off. The torso of the man above is orange-yellow: one of the sawyers below is cinnamon-color, the other a shining black as of lacquer: all are sculpturally muscled; and they sing as they saw:

Aïe! dos calé,
Aïe!
Aïe! dos calé!
Aïe, scié bois,
Aïe!
Pou nou allé. . . .

. . . Such incidents become rarer as you begin the long descent, through cane-fields and cacaoyères, from the wooded heights to the further sea — leaving shadows and coolness behind to ride over lands all uncovered to the sun; but the immense peace

charms like a caress, and the magnificent expansions of the view console for the seeming absence of human life. Behind you, and to north and south, the mornes heighten their semi-circle above the undulating leagues of yellow cane — and beyond them sharper summits loom, all violet — and over the violet tower successive surgings of paler peaks and cusps and jagged ridges — phantom blues and pearls. Before you, over the yellow miles, purples the far crescent of sea under its horizon curve — a band of upward-fading opal light; — and a strong warm wind is blowing in your face. You ride on, sometimes up a low wide hill, sometimes over a plateau — more often down a broad incline — the sea alternately vanishing and reappearing — and leave the main road at last to follow a way previously hidden by rising ground — a plantation road, bordered with cocoa-palms. It brings you by long windings, between canes that shut off the view on either hand, to one of the prettiest valleys in the world. At least you will deem it so, as you draw rein at the verge of a morne, to admire the almost perfect half-round of softly wrinkled hills opening to the sea — whose foam-line stretches like a snowy quivering thread between two green peaks, over a band of ebon beach; — and the golden expanse of canes below; — and the river dividing it, broadening between fringes of bamboo, to reach the breakers; — and the tenderness of shadows blue-tinted by vapors, the flickering of sunlight in the silver of cascades, the

touching of sky and sea beyond all. Last, you will notice the plantation buildings on a knoll below, in a grove of cocoa-palms: — the long yellow-painted mill, with its rumbling water-wheel and tall chimney; — the rhommerie; — the sugar-house; — the village of thatched cabins, with banana leaves fluttering in tiny gardens; — the single-story residence of the planter, built to resist winds and earthquakes; — the cottage of the overseer; — the hurricane-house, or case-à-vent; — and the white silhouette of a high wooden cross at the further entrance to the little settlement.

All this was once the property of the Desrivières — the whole valley from shore to hill-top: the atelier numbered nearly one hundred and fifty hands. Since then, the plantation has been sold and resold many times — exploited with varying fortune by foreigners as well as Creoles; — and nevertheless there have been so few changes that the place itself probably looks just as it looked fifty years, or even a hundred years ago.

But at the time when the Desrivières owned Anse-Marine, plantation life offered an aspect very different to that which it presents to-day. On this estate in particular, it was patriarchal and picturesque to a degree scarcely conceivable by one who knows the colony only since the period inaugurated by emancipation. The slaves were treated very much like children: it was a traditional family policy to sell only those who could not be controlled

without physical punishment. Each adult was allowed a small garden, which he might cultivate as he pleased — half-days being allotted twice in every week for that purpose; and the larger part of the money received for the produce, the slave was permitted to retain. Legally a slave could own nothing, yet several of the Desrivières hands were known to have economized creditable sums, with the encouragement of their owner. Work was performed with song, to the music of the drum; — there were holidays, and evenings of privileged dancing. The great occasion of the year was the fête of Madame Desrivières, the mother of the young planter, the old mistress (tétesse) — a day of bamboulas and caleindas — when all the slaves were received by the lady on the veranda: each kissed her hand and each found in it a silver coin. But it was a delight for the visitor, especially if a European, to watch even the common incidents of this colonial country life, so full of exotic oddities and unconscious poetry.

The routine of each day opened with an amusing scene — the morning inspection of the feet of the children. These, up to the age of nine or ten, had little to do but to play and eat. They were under the charge of the infirmière, Tanga, an old African woman, who, aided by her daughters, prepared their simple food, and looked after them while their mothers were in the fields. Soon after sunrise, Tanga, accompanied by the overseer, would as-

semble them, and make them sit down in line on the long plank benches under the awning of the infirmary building: then at the command, "Lévé piézautt!" they would all hold up their little feet together, and the inspection would begin. Whenever Tanga's sharp eye detected the small round swelling which betrays the presence of a chique, the child was sent to the infirmary for immediate treatment, and the mother's name taken down by the overseer for reprimand — every mother being held responsible for a chique allowed to remain in her child's foot overnight. There was so much tickling and laughing and screaming at these inspections, that Tanga always had to frighten the children several times before the examination could be finished.

Another morning scene of interest was the departure of a singing caravan of women and girls, carrying to market on their heads various products of the plantation: cocoa, coffee, cassia; and fruits — cocoanuts, and mangues, oranges and bananas, corossols (custard-apples) and "cinnamon-apples" (pommes cannelles).

Then a merry event, which occurred almost weekly, was the sortie of the gommier — a huge canoe nearly sixty feet long, made from a single extraordinary tree. It had no rudder, but a bow at either end, so as to move equally well in either direction; and benches for a dozen paddlers, with a raised seat in the centre for a drummer. It had two commandeurs, one at each bow; — it could carry a

dozen barrels of rum and six or seven casks of sugar; — and it was used chiefly for transporting these products to the small vessels from Saint Pierre, which dared not venture near the dangerous surf. The gommier itself could only be launched from a sloping cradle built expressly for it over deep water in the hollow of a projecting cliff. When the freight had been stowed and the rowers were in their seats, the drummer beat a signal; blocks were removed, cables loosed, and the long craft shot into the sea — all its paddles smiting the water simultaneously, in time to the rhythm of the tamtam, or the tamboubelai.

Every Sunday afternoon the Père Kerambrun came on horseback from the neighboring village to catechise the negro children. It was usually in the sugar house that he held his little class — the broad doors being thrown open front and rear to admit the sea-breeze, and the sun would throw in spidery shadows of palm-heads on the floor. The old priest knew how to teach the little ones in their own tongue — repeating over and over again each question and answer of the Creole catechism, till the children learned them by heart, and could chant them like a refrain.

"Coument ou ka crié fi Bon-Dié?" the father would ask. (How do you call the Son of the Good-God?)

Then all the child voices, repeating the question and its answer, would shrill in unison:

"Coument ou ka crié fi Bon-Dié? — Nou ka crié li Zézou-Chri."

"Et ça y fai pou nou-zautt, fi Bon-Dié-à?" (And what did He do for us, that Son of the Good-God?)

"Et ça y fai pou nou-zautt, fi Bon-Dié-à? — Li payé pou nou p'allé dans lenfé; li baill toutt sang-li pou ça." (He paid for us not to go to hell; He gave all His blood for that.)

"Et quilé priè qui pli meillè-adans toutt priè nou ka fai?" (And what is the best prayer among all the prayers we say?)

"Et quilé priè qui pli meillè-adans toutt priè nou ka fai? — C'est Note Pè,

"pace Zézou-Chri
montré nou li!"

— all would sing together. (It is the Notre Père — the Lord's prayer — because Jesus Christ showed us how to say it.)

And at the end of each day's task — when the lambi-shell was blown for the last time to summon all from the fields and the mill buildings, there was the patriarchal spectacle of evening prayer — an old colonial custom. The master and his overseer, standing by the cross erected before the little village of the plantation, waited for all the hands to assemble. Each man came, bearing the regulation bundle of forage for the animals, and laying the package of herbs before him, removed his hat. Then all, women and men, would kneel down and repeat

in unison the Je vous salue, Marie, the Notre Père, and the Creed — as the stars thrilled out, and the yellow glow died behind the peaks.

. . . Often, when the nights were clear and warm, the slaves would assemble after the evening meal, to hear stories told by the libres-de-savane (old men and women exempted from physical labor) — those curious stories which composed the best part of the unwritten literature of a people forbidden to read. In those days, such oral literature gave delight to adults as well as to children, to békés as well as to negroes: it even exerted some visible influence upon colonial character. Every da was a story-teller. Her recitals first developed in the white child intrusted to her care the power of fancy — Africanizing it, perhaps, to a degree that after-education could not totally remove — creating a love of the droll and the extraordinary. One did not weary of hearing these stories often repeated; — for they were told with an art impossible to describe; and the little songs or refrains belonging to each — sometimes composed of African words, more often of nonsense-rhymes imitating the bamboula chants and caleinda improvisations — held a weird charm which great musicians have confessed. And furthermore, in these contes créoles — whether of purely African invention, or merely African adaptation of old-world folk-lore and fable — the local color is marvelous: there is such a reflection of colonial thought and life as no translation can preserve.

The scenes are laid among West Indian woods and hills, or sometimes in the quaintest quarter of an old colonial port. The European cottage of folk-tale becomes the tropical case or ajoupa, with walls of bamboo and roof of dried cane-leaves; — the Sleeping Beauties could never be discovered in their primeval forest but by some nègue-marron or chasseu-chou; — the Cinderellas and Princesses appear as beautiful half-breed girls, wearing a costume never seen in picture-books; — the fairies of old-world myth are changed into the Bon-Dié or the Virgin Mary; — the Bluebeards and giants turn into quimboiseurs and devils; — the devils themselves (except when they yawn to show the fire in their throats) so closely resemble the half-nude travailleurs, with their canvas trousers and mouchouè-fautas and other details of costume, as not to be readily recognized: it requires keen inspection to detect the diabolic signs — the red hair, crimson eyes, and horn-roots under the shadowing of the enormous "mule-food hat" or the chapeau-bacoué.

Then the Bon-Dié, the "Good-God," figures as the best and kindest of old békés — an affable gray planter whose habitation lies somewhere in the clouds over the Montagne Pelée: you can see his "sheep" and his "choux-caraïbes" sometimes in the sky. And the breaker of enchantments is the parish priest — Missié labbé — who saves pretty naughty girls by passing his stole about their necks. . . . It was at Anse-Marine that Youma found most

of the tales she recounted to Mayotte, when the child became old enough to take delight in them.

. . . So the life had been in the valley plantation for a hundred years, with little varying. Doubtless there were shadows in it — sorrows which never found utterance— happenings that never had mention in the verses of any chantrelle — days without song or laughter, when the fields were silent. . . . But the tropic sun ever flooded it with dazzling color; and great moons made rose-light over it; and always, always, out of the purple vastness of the sea, a mighty breath blew pure and warm upon it — the breath of the winds that are called unchanging: les Vents Alizés.

III

In the morning Youma usually took Mayotte to the river to bathe — in a clear shallow pool curtained with bamboos, where there were many strange little fish to be seen; — sometimes in the evening, an hour before the sunsetting, she would take her to the sea-beach, to enjoy the breeze and watch the tossing of the surf. But during the heat of the day, the child was permitted to view the wonder-world of the plantation only from the verandas of the house; and the hours seemed long. The cutting of the cane in the neighboring fields to the playing of the drum — the coming and going of the wagons creaking under their loads of severed stems — the sharpening of cutlasses at the grindstone — the sweet smell of the vesou — the rumble of the machines — the noisy foaming of the little stream turning the wheel of the mill: all the sights and odors and sounds of plantation life filled her with longing to be out amidst them. What tantalized her most was the spectacle of the slave children playing on the grass-plot and about the buildings — playing funny games in which she longed to join.

"I wish I was a little negress," she said one day, as she watched them from the porch.

"Oh!" exclaimed Youma in astonishment . . . "and why?"

"Because then you would let me run and roll in the sun."

"But the sun does not hurt little negroes and negresses; and the sun would make you very sick, doudoux. . . ."

"And that is why I wish I was a little negress."

"It is not nice to wish that!" declared Youma, severely.

"Why is it not nice?"

"Fie! . . . wish to be an ugly little negress!"

"You are a negress, da — or nearly the same thing — and you are not ugly at all. You are beautiful, da; you look like chocolate."

"Is it not much prettier to look like cream?"

"No: I like chocolate better than cream . . . tell me a story, da."

It was the only way to keep her quiet. She was four years old, and had developed an extraordinary passion for stories. The story "Montala," of the wizard orange-tree which grew to heaven; — the story "Mazinlin-guin," of the proud girl who married a goblin; — the story of the Zombi-bird whose feathers were colored "with the colors of other days" — the bird that sang in the stomachs of those who ate it, and then made itself whole again; — the story of La Belle, whose godmother was the Virgin; — the story of Pié-Chique-à, who learned to play the fiddle after the devil's manner; — the story of Colibri, the Humming-Bird, who once owned the only drum there was in the world, and would not

lend it when the Bon-Dié wanted to make a road, although the negroes said they could not work without a drum; — the story of Nanie Rosette, the greedy child, who sat down upon the Devil's Rock and could not get up again, so that her mother had to hire fifty carpenters to build a house over her before midnight; — the wonderful story of Yé, who found an old blind devil roasting snails in the woods, and stole the food out of the old devil's calabash, but was caught by him, and obliged to carry him home and feed him for ever so long . . . these and many more such tales had been told to little Mayotte already, with the effect of stimulating her appetite for more. If these tales did not form the supreme pleasure of her stay at the plantation, they at least enhanced and colored all her other pleasures — spreading about reality an atmosphere deliciously unreal — imparting a fantastic personality to lifeless things — filling the shadows with zombis — giving speech to shrubs and trees and stones . . . even the canes talked to her, chououa-chououa, like old whispering Babo, the libre-de-savane. Each habitant of the plantation — from the smallest black child to tall Gabriel, or "Gabou," the commandeur of all — realized for her some figure of the contes; and each spot of hill or shore or ravine visited in her morning walks with Youma, furnished her with the scenery for some impossible episode. . . .

"Mayotte!" exclaimed Youma; — "you know

one must not tell stories in the daytime, unless one wants to see zombis at night!"

"No, da! . . . tell me one . . . I am not afraid, da."

"Oh! the little liar! . . . You are afraid — very much afraid of zombis. And if I tell you a story you will see them to-night."

"Doudoux-da, no! — tell me one. . . ."

"You will not wake me up to-night, and tell me you see zombis?"

"No, da — I promise."

"Well, then, for this once" — said Youma, uttering the traditional words which announce that the Creole story-teller is ready — "bobonne fois?"

"Toua fois bel conte!" cried the delighted child. And Youma began:

DAME KÉLÉMENT

Long, long ago there lived an old woman who everybody said was a witch, and in league with the devil. And nearly all the bad things said about her were true.

One day a poor little girl lost her way in the woods. After she had walked until she could not walk any more, she sat down and began to cry. She cried for a long, long time.

All about her she could see nothing but trees and lianas; — all the ground was covered with slippery green roots; and the trees were so high, and the lianas so woven between them, that there was very little light. She was lost in the grands bois — the great woods which swarm with serpents. . . .

All at once, while she sat there crying, she heard strange sounds quite near her — sounds of singing and dancing.

She got up and walked toward the sounds. Looking through the trees she saw the same old woman that people used to talk about, riding on a balai-zo,[1] and dancing round and round in a ring with ever so many serpents and crapaud-làde — great ugly toads. And they were all singing:

Kingué,
Kingué;
Vonvon
Malato,
Vloum-voum!
Jambi,
Kingué,
Tou galé,
Zo galé,
Vloum!

The little girl stood there stupid with fright: she could not even cry any more.

But the old woman had seen the leaves move; and she came with a sort of fire playing all round her, and asked the little girl:

"What are you doing in the razié?"[2]

"Mother, I lost my way in the woods." . . .

"Then, my child, you must come to the house with me. . . . You might undo me, unravel me, destroy me if you had a chance."

The little girl did not understand all that the old woman said; for the wicked old creature was talking about matters that only sorcerers know.

By the time they got to the house, the poor child was very tired: she sat down on a calabash which served the witch for a chair. Then she saw the old woman light two fires on the earth floor, with torch-gum — which smells

[1] A broom made of the branches of a shrub called guiyantine.

[2] Razié: the lower growths which occupy the ground under forest-trees, or cover the soil in places where the trees have been cleared away.

like incense. On one fire she placed a big pot full of man-man-chou, camagnioc, yams, christophines, bananas, devil's egg-plants (melongène-diabe), and many herbs the little girl did not know the names of. On the other fire she began to broil some toads, and an earth-lizard — zanolitè.

At noon the old woman swallowed all that as if it was nothing at all; — then she looked at the little girl, who was nearly dead for hunger, and said to her:

"Until you can tell me what name I am called by, you will not get anything to eat." . . . Then she went away, leaving the little girl alone.

The little girl began to weep. Suddenly she felt something touching her. It was a big serpent — the biggest she had ever seen. She was so frightened that she almost died; — then she cried out:

"Oti papa moin? — oti manman moin?
Latitolé ké mangé moin!"

But the serpent did not do her any harm: he only rubbed his head fondly against her shoulder, and sang:

"Bennemè, bennepè — tambou belai!
Yche p'accoutoumé tambou belai!"

The little girl cried out louder than before:

"Oti papa moin? — oti manman moin?
Latitolé ké mangé moin!"

But the serpent, still rubbing his head fondly against her, answered, singing very softly:

"Bennepè, bennemè — tambou belai!
Yche p'accoutoumé tambou belai!"

Then when he saw she had become less afraid, he lifted his head close to her ear, and whispered something.

The moment she heard it she ran out of the house and into the woods again. There she began to ask all the animals she met to tell her the old witch's name.

She asked every four-footed beast; — she asked all the lizards and the birds. But they did not know.

She came to a big river, and she asked all the fishes. The fishes, one after another, made answer to her that they did not know. But the cirique, the river crab that is yellow like a plantain — the cirique knew. The cirique was the only one in the whole world who knew the name. The name was Dame Kélément.

. . . Then the child ran back to the house with all her might; her little stomach was paining her so that she felt she could not bear the pain much longer. The old woman was already at the house, scraping some manioc to make flour and cassave. . . . The little girl walked up to her, and said:

"Give me to eat, Dame Kélément."

Two flashes of fire leaped from the witch's eyes: she gave such a start that she nearly broke her head against the iron-stones that she balanced her pots on.

"Child! you have got the better of me!" she screamed. "Take everything! — take it, take it! — eat, eat, eat! — all in the house is yours!"

Then she sprang through the door quick as a powder-flash: she seemed to fly through the fields and woods. . . . And she ran straight to the river; — for it was deep under the bed of the river that the Devil had buried the name which he had given her. She stood on the bank, and chanted:

"Loche, O loche! — was it you who told that my name was Dame Kélément?"

Then the loche, that is black like the black stones of the stream, lifted up its head, and cried:

"No, mamma! — no, mamma! — it was not I who told that your name was Dame Kélément."

"Titiri, O titiri! — tell me, was it any among you who told that my name was Dame Kélément?"

Then the titiri, the tiny transparent titiri, answered all together, clinging to the stones:

"No, mamma! — no, mamma! — none of us ever said that your name was Dame Kélément."

"Cribîche, O cribîche! — was it you who told that my name was Dame Kélément?"

Then the cribîche, the great crawfish of the river, lifted up his head and his claws, and made answer:

"No, mamma! — no, mamma! — it was not I who said that your name was Dame Kélément."

"Tétart, O tétart! — was it you who said that my name was Dame Kélément?"

And the tétart, that is gray like the gray rocks of iron to which it holds fast, made answer, saying:

"No, mamma! — no, mamma! — it was not I who told them that your name was Dame Kélément."

"Dormeur, O dormeur! — was it you who told that my name was Dame Kélément?"

And the dormeur, the lazy dormeur, that sleeps in the shadow of the rocks, awoke and rose and made answer:

"No, mamma! — no, mamma! — it was not I who told them that your name was Dame Kélément."

"Matavalé, O matavalé! — was it you that said my name was Dame Kélément?"

And the matavalé, the shining matavalé, that flashes like copper when the sun touches his scales, opened his mouth and answered:

"No, mamma! — no, mamma! — I never said that your name was Dame Kélément!"

"Milet! — bouc! — pisquette! — zangui! — zhabitant! — was it any one among you who told that my name was Dame Kélément?"

But they all cried out:

"No, no, no, mamma! — none of us ever said that your name was Dame Kélément."

"Cirique, O cirique! — was it you who said my name was Dame Kélément?"

Then the cirique lifted up his eyes and his yellow claws, and screamed:

"Yes, you old wretch! — yes, you old witch! — yes, you old malediction! — yes, it was I who said that your name was Dame Kélément!" . . .

The moment she heard those words she stamped on the ground so hard that the Devil heard her, and opened a great hole at her feet; and she leaped into it head-first. And the ground closed over her. Two days after, there grew up from the place a clump of the weed they call arrête-nègue — the plant that is all thorns.

Now while this was happening, the serpent had turned into a man; — for the old witch had changed a man into that serpent. He took the little girl by the hand, and led her to her mother.

But they came back again next day to search the old woman's cabin. They found in it seven casks filled with the bones of dead people; and also ever so much silver and gold — more than enough to make the little girl rich. When she got married, there was the finest wedding ever seen in this country.

. . . Mayotte's morning visits to the river with Youma had furnished her with material for the imaginative scenery of the last part of this foolish little story, which delighted her so much that she made her nurse repeat it over and over again. She had seen the crawfish show their heads above the pools; she had caught the titiri in her little hands;

she knew by sight the loche and the tétart, the matavalé and the zhabitant, the dormeur and the cirique. She also knew — by painful experience — the arrête-nègue. Dame Kélément, she fancied, must have had a face like old Tanga's when angry; and the little girl who lost her way in the woods must have looked just like a certain little black girl whom Tanga often had to scold, and who used to cry in the most extraordinary way: "Aïe-yaïe-yaïe-yaïe-yaïe-yaïe!"

But in the midst of her ecstasy, a faint fear came to her with the recollection of Youma's warning. . . .

"Da," she asked, timidly, "I will not see zombis to-night, will I?"

"Ah! you must not ask me to tell stories in the daytime any more," said Youma, guardedly.

"But tell me, I won't see them to-night — will I?"

"If you see them," replied Youma, without mercy, "call me! — I will make them go away."

IV

YOUMA was alone in the house that night with the child; for M. Desrivières had ridden over to Sainte-Marie, and the servants occupied an adjoining building. . . . She was roused from her sleep by hearing the child cry:

"Da, oh da! — moin pè!"

The tiny lamp left burning before the images of the saints had gone out; — little Mayotte was afraid.

"Pa pè" — called Youma, quickly rising to caress her — "mi da-ou, chè."

"Oh! there is Something in the room, da!" said the child. She had heard stealthy sounds.

"No, doudoux; you have been dreaming. . . . Da will light the lamp for you."

She felt for the matches on the little night-table — could not find them — remembered she had left them in the adjoining salon — moved toward the door; — and her foot suddenly descended upon something that sent a cold shock through all her blood — something clammy and chill, that lived! Instantly she threw all the weight of her lithe strong body upon that foot — the left: she never could tell why; — perhaps the impulse was instinctive. Under her naked sole the frigid life she strove to crush writhed with a sudden power that nearly threw her down; and in the same moment she felt something wind round her ankle, over her knee,

wrapping the flesh from heel to thigh with bruising force . . . the folds of a serpent!

"Tambou!" she muttered between her teeth — and hardened her muscles against the tightening coil, and strengthened the pressure of her foot upon the unseen enemy. . . . The foot of the half-breed, never deformed by shoes, retains prehensile power — grasps like a hand; — the creature writhed in vain to escape. Already the cold terror had passed; and Youma felt only the calm anger of resolve: hers was one of those semi-savage natures wherein fear rarely lives beyond the first moment of nervous surprise. She called softly to the little one.

"Ti doudoux?"

"Da?"

"Do not move till I tell you: stay in bed; there is a bête in the room."

"Aïe, aïe!" sobbed the frightened child — "what is it, da?"

"Do not be afraid, cocotte: I am holding it, and it cannot bite you, unless you get up. I am going to call for Gabriel: do not stir, dear."

And Youma called, with all the power of her clear voice:

"Sucou! — sucou! Eh! Gabou!" . . .

"What is it? — what is it, da?" sobbed the little girl.

"Do not cry like that, or I will get angry. How can I see what it is in the dark?" . . .

She called again and again for aid. . . . Bon-Dié!

how powerful the creature was! — the pressure of the coil became a numbing pain. Her strength was already beginning to weaken under the obstinate, icy, ever-increasing constriction. What if the cramp should come to help it? . . . Or was it the entering of venom into her blood that made those strange tinglings and tremblings? . . . She had not felt herself stricken; — but only the month before a plantation-hand had been bitten in the dark without feeling it; and they could not save him. . . . "Eh! Gabou!" . . . Even the servants in the pavilion seemed to sleep like dead. And if the child should leave the bed in spite of her warning? . . .

"Oh! they are coming, da!" cried Mayotte. "Gabou is coming!" She had seen the flash of his lantern through the slatted shutters. "But the door is locked, da!"

"Stay in bed, Mayotte! — if you move it will bite you!" The salon filled with voices and sound of feet; then there was a pushing at the bedroom door.

"It is locked," called Youma; — "break it! — smash it in! — I cannot move!"

. . . A crash! — the room filled with a flare of lanterns; and Youma saw that the livid throat was under her foot; — the hideous head vainly strained at her heel.

"Pa bouèné piess!" cried the voice of the commandeur. "Do not stir for your life, my girl! Keep still for your life! Stay just as you are!"

She stood like a bronze. Gabriel was beside her,

his naked cutlass in his hand. . . . "Quim fò! quim fò! — pas bouèné piess, piess, piess!" . . . Then she saw the gleam of his steel pass, and the severed head leap to the wainscoting, where it fell gaping — the eyes still burning like sparks of charcoal. In the same moment the coil loosed and dropped, and Youma lifted her foot; — the body of the reptile lashed the planking, twisted, strove to crawl as if to join the head; — again and again the cutlass descended, and each lopped fragment nevertheless moved.

"Are you hurt, my daughter?" a kind voice asked — the voice of M. Desrivières: he had seen it all.

"Pa couè maîte," she answered, looking at her foot. But she did not know. He led her to a chair, knelt down and began the examination himself; while Mayotte climbed to Youma's neck, clinging and kissing and crying: "Did he bite you, dear da? — did he bite you?" . . . "No, doudoux; no, cocotte: do not be afraid!" She was telling the truth unawares: the serpent had never been able to use his fangs; but the seaming of his coil remained upon the smooth red skin as if branded. . . . Gabriel had dropped his cutlass and detached the long mouchoir-fautas about his waist to make a ligature: he was the panseur of the plantation.

"Never mind, my son," said M. Desrivières: "she has not been bitten."

Gabriel stood dumb for astonishment.

Meanwhile the room had filled with armed plantation-hands, and a clamor of exclamations. . . . "Die Seignè! qui sépent!" . . . "Mi tête-là ka lè modé toujou!" . . . "C'est guiabe mênm!" . . . "Moceauà ka rimié pou yo joinne!" . . . "Aïe! Youma tchoque! — ouill papa!" . . . And a serpent nearly six feet in length! No one had ever heard of such a feat before. When Youma told how it happened — very simply and very calmly — there was a dead hush of admiration. It was first broken by the rough basso of the commandeur, exclaiming: "Ouaill! ou brave, mafi! — foute! ou sévè!" . . . "Severe," the negro's strongest adjective to qualify courage, retains in his patois something of quaint and reverential meaning — something of that sense which survives in our own modern application of it to art and truth: the Creole now rarely uses it except in irony, but Gabriel uttered it with unconscious exquisiteness; and M. Desrivières himself applauded.

"Doudoux-da-moin!" cried Mayotte, smothering her nurse with caresses; — "ti cocotte-da-moin! . . . Mais bo y, papoute! — bo y!" she pleaded, to M. Desrivières. He smiled and kissed Youma's forehead.

"And it was all my fault," declared Mayotte, beginning to sob again: "I made her tell me stories in the daytime."

But that serpent was no zombi: they found his trail and followed it to a hole which some rat had gnawed in the planking of the salon, under a sideboard.

V

FROM that night Youma became the object of a sort of cult at Anse-Marine; — there is no quality the black admires so much as physical courage. The entire atelier began to evince for her a respect almost fetichistic. The girl's heroism had conquered any petty dislikes which her city manners and natural reserve might have provoked, and had hopelessly crushed the small jealousies of house-servants who imagined themselves supplanted by a stranger in the master's home. These now only sought to obtain her good-will, to win her smile; — the plantation declared itself proud of her — boasted of her prowess to the slaves of neighboring estates; — the hands saluted her when she passed, as if she were a mistress; and the improvisors of the caleinda chants celebrated her praises in their belai. Even the overseer, M. de Comislles, though a rigid disciplinarian, no longer addressed her as mafi, "my daughter," but as Manzell — Manzell Youma.

But what secretly pleased her above all was the attention of Gabriel. Gabriel appeared to have taken a sudden fancy to her. Although the busiest man on the estate, he found time to show his friendship by little kindnesses and courtesies of which one could scarcely have believed so rude a nature capable. He invented opportunities to meet her during the midday respite from labor, and of evenings —

before or after making his nightly round to see that all the regulations of cleanliness and good order had been obeyed in every cabin — that clothing had been washed, and refuse removed. His visits were necessarily brief; — they were also strangely silent: he rarely spoke, except when asked a direct question, or when teased by Mayotte into taking her on his knees and answering her prattle. More usually he would simply seat himself on the veranda close to Youma's rocking-chair, and listen to her chat with the child, or her story-telling — seldom even turning his face towards her, but seeming to watch the noisy life of the cases. But almost at every visit he would bring something for the child — knowing she would share it with her da — some gift of fruit gathered in his own garden: such as a bunch of figues, which are tiny dessert bananas scarcely two inches long; — or a zabricot (tropical apricot) — that singular fruit the ancient Haytians held sacred as the food of ghosts — a colossal plum, as large as the largest turnip, with musky vermilion flesh, and a kernel big as a duck's egg; — or an odorous branch cut from a zorange-macaque tree, heavy with mandarines; — or a fouitt-defendu — the same, according to Creole tradition, which Eve was tempted by the Serpent to eat — a sort of huge orange larger than a pumpkin, with a luscious pink pulp. . . . One day — the day of Mayotte's fête — Gabriel brought a very pretty present: a basket he had himself woven of bamboo strips and liana stems, filled with

samples of almost everything the estate produced. There was a beautiful little sugar-loaf — a package of batons-caco, or sticks of chocolate — a little couï, or half-calabash, filled with brown sugar — a can of refined syrup — a painmi, or boiled-maize cake, sweetened, and wrapped in a piece of balisier leaf tied with a ti-liane-razié; — some tablettes of grated cocoa candied in liquid sugar; — and a nice bundle of Chambéry cane, tied with a cane leaf. . . . Another day, when Youma had taken the child to the river for her morning bath, she found there, fixed upon the bank beside the little pool, a broad and handsome rustic bench, built of the long tough stems of the pommier-rose, with split bamboos for the back and the seat: Gabriel had made it, working at night, and had carried it to the river before daybreak, as a surprise for Youma.

. . . Silent as Gabriel's visits were, they began to exert an influence on Youma. She found in them an unfamiliar pleasure — became accustomed to look for them with unconscious eagerness; — even felt vaguely unhappy when he did not come. And yet, after having failed to see him for a longer time than usual, she never asked what had prevented his visit; — she would not have confessed, even to herself, that she feared his indifference. He, on the other hand, never offered an explanation. The two strange natures comprehended each other without speech — drew and dominated each other in a dumb, primitive, half-savage way.

. . . He brought one afternoon a fine sapota — that fruit in whose smooth flushed swarthy skin Creole fancy finds the semblance of half-breed beauty. Within its flat black seed, between the two halves of the kernel, lies a pellicle — creamy, fragile, and shaped like a heart — which it requires dexterity to remove without breaking. Lovers challenge each other to do it as a test of affection.

"Mayotte," said Youma, after they had eaten the fruit together — "I want to see if you love me." . . . She cracked the flinty shell of a seed between her teeth — then tried to remove the pellicle, and broke it.

"Oh, da!" cried the child, "it is not true! — you know I love you." . . .

"Piess, piess!" declared Youma, teasing her; — "you do not love me one bit!"

But Gabriel asked for a seed, and she gave him one. Rude and hard as his fingers were, he took out the little heart intact, and gave it to Mayotte.

"Ou ouè!" he said, maliciously; — "da ou ainmein moin passé ou!" (Your da loves me better than you.)

"It is not true! — no, cocotte!" Youma assured the child. But she did not feel sure of what she said.

. . . When the cane-cutting season was over, Gabriel asked and obtained leave to go to La Trinité one holiday morning. He returned at evening, later than the hour at which he was accustomed to find

the young capresse on the veranda; but she was still there. Seeing him approach, she rose with the child asleep in her arms, and put her finger to her lips.

"Quimbé!" whispered Gabriel, slipping into Youma's hand something flat and square, wrapped in tissue-paper: then, without another word, he strode away to his quarters.

When Mayotte had been put to bed, Youma looked at the packet. . . . A little card-board box: within it, upon a layer of pink cotton, shone two large light circles of plain gold — barbaric ear-rings such as are only made by colonial goldsmiths, but well suited to the costume and bronze skin of the race of color. . . . Youma already possessed far finer jewelry; but Gabriel had walked thirty kilometres for these.

He smiled as he passed by her window in the morning and saw them shimmering in her ears. Her acceptance of the gift signified assent to a question unspoken — the question which civilized men most fear to ask, but which the Creole slave could ask without words.

VI

"WHAT is it, my son?" said M. Desrivières, as Gabriel, who had asked to speak with him alone, stood nervously twirling a great straw hat between his fingers.

"Maîte," he began, shyly — "moin ainmein ti bonne ou." . . .

"Youma?" queried M. Desrivières in surprise.

"Mais oui, maîte."

"Is Youma willing to marry you?"

"Mais oui, maîte."

For a few moments M. Desrivières could make no reply: the possibility of a union between the two had never occurred to him, and Gabriel's revelation almost shocked him. The commandeur was certainly one of the finest physical men of his race — young, industrious, intelligent; but he would make a rough mate indeed for a girl brought up as Youma had been. She was also a slave, without education; but she had received a domestic training that gave her a marked superiority above her class, and she had moral qualities more delicate by far than those of Gabriel. . . . Above all, she had been the companion of Aimée's childhood, and afterwards her friend rather than her servant: the influence of Aimée had done much for her; — something of Aimée's manner, and of Aimée's thought, had become a part of her own. . . . No; Madame Peyronnette would never

hear of such a union: the mere idea of it would revolt her like a brutality!

"But, Gabriel," he answered at last, "Youma does not belong to me. She belongs to my mother-in-law."

"Master, I know she belongs to Madame Peyronnette," said Gabriel, making the rim of his chapeau-bacouè revolve still more quickly; — "but I thought you would like to do something for me."

The planter smiled at the suggestion. . . . He had often expressed to Gabriel the wish to see him marry — had even promised to give him a handsome wedding when he should have made a choice. But Gabriel seemed in no haste to choose. Then it became known that, while he remained indifferent to the girls of Anse-Marine, he was in the habit of making furtive visits to a neighboring estate; and M. Desrivières himself went there to discover the object of those visits. He found it in the person of a handsome griffone; and, wishing to give Gabriel an agreeable surprise, bought the girl for fifteen hundred francs, and brought her back with him. But from the day that she belonged to the plantation, Gabriel paid no further attention to her whatever. Secretly, he resented his master's intermeddling in the matter; and nevertheless, in spite of that episode, it now seemed to him quite natural to beg M. Desrivières to buy Youma for him. . . . The planter, however, felt no anger; — the incident rather amused him. He valued Gabriel highly, and under-

stood him well: — a nature impatient of control, but capable of exerting it to an extraordinary degree. As a commandeur he was inestimable; as a travailleur he would have been almost impossible to manage. His former owner, a petit blanc, had been glad to sell him, with the frank assurance that he was "sullen, incorrigible, and dangerous." De Comislles, who purchased him, knew it was a case of "fine stock" unappreciated; and often boasted of the bargain he had made.

"I cannot buy her for you, my son," said M. Desrivières, kindly. "Youma is not for sale. Madame Peyronnette will not sell her at any price — even to me. . . . I am going to the city to-morrow, and will ask my mother-in-law if she will let Youma marry you: that is all I can do."

Gabriel ceased to twirl his hat: he stood silent for a little while, with his eyes cast down, and a decidedly sinister expression in his face. He had never thought that Youma's fate might not be decided even by M. Desrivières's wealth and influence: a suspicion that the planter's assurances were false momentarily darkened his thoughts. Then he looked up, bowed to M. Desrivières, and with a hoarsely muttered "Mèçi, maîte," withdrew.

"It is Youma who will suffer the most," thought M. Desrivières.

VII

MADAME PEYRONNETTE's decision was just what M. Desrivières had expected. She was even more astonished by Youma's choice than he had been — could only attribute it to a fascination purely physical, or, as she termed it, animal: the one peril among all others that she had especially feared for Youma. She even reproached her son-in-law — held him responsible for the affair; and finally insisted upon Youma's immediate return to the city. She did not wish that another should be Mayotte's nurse; but whether Mayotte remained at Anse-Marine or not, Youma should return. It was time at all events that the child should begin to learn something more important than sucking sugar-cane and playing with little negroes; — besides, she had become quite strong, and the city was exceptionally healthy. Youma might continue to live with the Desrivières at the Fort; but a girl innocent enough to become enamoured of the first common negro who made love to her, needed looking after; and Madame Peyronnette intended to make sure that no more such things should happen. . . . M. Desrivières offered no opposition to his mother-in-law's wishes; he announced his intention to return to town himself as soon as possible, and bring Mayotte and her nurse with him.

. . . To Youma this decision brought a shock of

pain that stupefied her too much for tears. Then, with the instinctive, automatic resentment that sudden pain provokes, came to her also for the first time the full keen sense of the fact that she was a slave — helpless to resist the will that struck her. Every disappointment she had ever known — each constraint, reprimand, refusal, suppression of an impulse, every petty pang she had suffered since a child — crowded to her memory, scorched it, blackened it; filled her with the delusion that she had been unhappy all her life, and with a hot secret anger against the long injustice imagined, breaking down her good sense, and her trained habit of cheerful resignation. In that instant she almost hated her godmother, hated M. Desrivières, hated everybody . . . except Gabriel. At his advent into her life, something long held in subjection within her — something like a darker passionate second soul, full of strange impulses and mysterious emotions — had risen to meet him, bursting its bonds, and winning mastery at last: the nature of the savage race whose blood dominated in her veins.

Its earlier rebellions had produced no graver result than occasional secret fits of melancholy — beginning after Aimée's departure to school, when Youma was first taken into an existence high-hedged about in those days with formalities extraordinary. Except during the evenings of a brief theatrical season, and the occasion of a select ball, the Creole ladies remained almost cloistered in their

homes from Sunday to Sunday, scarcely leaving their apartments except to go to church — never entering a store under any circumstances, and having even the smallest details of their shopping done for them by slaves. Enervated by a climate that would probably have exterminated the European element within a few generations but for the constant infusion of fresh blood from abroad, the white women of the colonies could adapt themselves without pain to this life of cool and elegant seclusion. But Youma was of the race of sun-lovers. The very privileges accorded her, the very training given to her as a sort of adopted child, had tended rather to contract her natural life than to expand it. In the country she had found larger opportunities for outdoor enjoyment, and freedom from formal restraints of a certain kind; but even in the country her existence was confined by her duty as a nurse — compressed into the small sphere of a child's requirements. Youma was too young to be a da. For the da there were no pleasures. The responsibilities of such a place — requiring nothing less than absolute self-sacrifice — were confided as a rule only to slaves who had been mothers, who had fulfilled the natural destiny of woman. But Youma had scarcely ceased to be a child, when she found herself again sentenced to act, think, and speak as a child — for the sake of a child not her own. Her magnificent youth dumbly protested against this perpetual constraint. Despite that sense of personal dignity Madame Peyronnette

had spared no pains to cultivate in her — the feeling of having social superiority among her class — she sometimes found herself envying the lot of others who would have gladly changed places with her: the girls who traveled singing over the sunny mountain roads, the negresses working in the fields, chanting belai to the tapping of the ka. Youma felt a painful pleasure in watching them. She suffered so much from the weariness of physical inaction; — she was so tired of living in shadow, of resting in rocking-chairs, of talking baby talk — just as in other years she had been tired of dwelling behind closed shutters, and broidering and sewing in a half-light, and hearing conversations which she could not understand. Still, at such moments, she had judged herself ungrateful — almost wicked — and battled with her discontent, and conquered it — until Gabriel came.

Gabriel! . . . He seemed to open to her a new world full of all that her being longed for — light, and joy, and melody: he appeared to her in some way blended with the freedom of air and sun, of river and sea — fresh scents of wood and field — the long blue shadows of morning — the rose-light of tropical moonrise — and the songs of the chantrelles — and the merriment of dances under the cocoa-palms to the throbbing thunder of the drums. Gabriel, so calm, so strong, so true! her man of all men, made for her by the Bon-Dié; — Gabriel, who, though a slave, could compel the esteem of his

master; — Gabriel, for whom she prayed each night, and laid before the Virgin's image her little offering of wild flowers; — Gabriel, with whom she would be so happy, even in the poorest of ajoupas — for whom she would gladly give liberty if she had it, or even her life if it could do him service! . . . She wished to be beautiful — and they said she was beautiful (yon bel-bois, like a shapely tree, like a young palm) — only for his sake . . . And they were going to take him from her — pretending that he was not good enough for her (as if *they* could know!) — because they wanted her to remain with them always, to suffer for them always, to live in darkness and silence, like a manicou. And they had the power to be cruel to her, to take him away from her! The world was all wrong — wrong at least for her. Whomsoever she loved was taken from her: first her mother, Douceline; then Aimée Desrivières; — now Gabriel.

. . . It was the morning after his arrival from the city that M. Desrivières had called her aside to tell her: she had just returned from the river with Mayotte, after giving the child her morning bath. He had spoken kindly, but very frankly — in a way that left no hope possible.

For a long time she sat speechless and motionless in her room: then, obeying the child's wish, went out with her upon the veranda. The day was exquisitely clear, with a tepid wind from the sea. Above her, on the nearer side of the valley, sounded the mellow

booming of a tambou-belai, and a chorus of African song. A troop of field-hands were making a new path to the summit of one of the mornes; the old path having been washed away by recent heavy rains. The overseer had surveyed the course for it, marked out the zigzag with stretched cords; and the workers were slowly descending in a double line — all singing — all the hoes and rammers keeping time to the drum rhythm. Sometimes the men would throw up their hoes in the air and catch them again, or exchange them in a fling, without losing the measure of the movement. And there was a girl — young Chrysaline — carrying a tray with tin cups, dobannes of water, and a pitcher of liquor; — serving drink all round at intervals; for the work was hot. . . . Youma looked for a tall figure in blue cotton shirt and white canvas trousers at the head of the column. But Gabriel was not visible. Another was acting in his place, overseeing the task, and keeping a watch for serpents — a black man, Marius.

Only three days more; and she would have to leave Anse-Marine — would see Gabriel no more. . . . They were going to return to the dull hot city in the dullest and hottest month of the year. . . . Did Gabriel know? . . . Or was it because he knew, that she did not see him among the workers? She felt that if he knew, he would contrive some chance to speak with her. . . .

Even as this feeling came, Gabriel appeared before

the house — made her a sign to leave the child and come to him.

He laid his hand caressingly upon her shoulder, and whispered:

"The master told me all this morning . . . he is going to take you away from us?"

"Yes," she answered, sadly; — "we are going back to the city."

"When?"

"Monday coming."

"It is only Thursday," he said, with a peculiar smile. . . . "Doudoux, you know that once they have you back in the city again, they will never let you see me, never! — yes, you know it!"

"But, Gabriel," she answered, with a choking in her voice — hurt by the tone of pleading in his words: "what can I do? — you know there is not any way."

"There *is* a way," he interrupted, almost roughly.

Wondering, she looked at him — a new vague hope dawning in her large eyes.

"There is a way, my girl," he repeated — "if you are brave. Look!"

He pointed beyond the valley, over the sea to the northeast, where loomed a shape of phantasmal beauty — a vision only seen in fairest weather. Out of the purpling ocean circle, the silhouette of Dominica towered against the amethystine day — with crown of ghostly violet peaks, and clouds far curled upon them, like luminous wool of gold.

"Doudoux, in one night!" . . . he whispered, watching her face.

She caught his meaning. . . . Freedom for the slave who could set his foot on British soil!

"Gabriel!" called the voice of M. de Comislles.

"Eti!" he shouted in answer. . . . "Think about it, my girl — chongé, chongé bien chè!"

"Gabriel!" again cried the voice of the overseer.

"Ka vini!" called Gabriel, running toward the summons.

. . . She returned to her accustomed place on the veranda, where Mayotte was playing with a black kitten. She scarcely heard the child's laughter, and joyous callings to her to look when the little animal performed some droll prank — answered mechanically as if half awake: her gaze continued fixed upon the shining apparition in the horizon, that tempted her will with its vapory loveliness. Slowly, while she gazed, it took diaphanous pallor — began to fade into the vast light. Then, as the sun climbed higher, it passed mysteriously away: there remained only the clear-colored circling sea, the rounded spotlessness of the summer heaven. . . . But the luminous violet memory of it lingered with her — burned into her thought.

She did not see Gabriel again that day. He seemed to avoid her purposely — to give her time to reflect.

VIII

. . . NEVER a doubt of Gabriel's ability to carry out his project entered her mind: the possibilities of pursuit and capture, of encountering a rafale in that awful channel — or even worse; for the hurricane season had set in — gave her little concern. What danger could she not brave for his sake? — anywhere with him she would feel secure.

But slowly the exaltation of her fancy began to calm. The totally unexpected suggestion of a means to frustrate the will of others, and to win all that she desired, had cooled the passion of her disappointment; and, with its cooling, her natural power of just reflection gradually returned. Then she felt afraid — afraid of something in herself that she knew was wrong. For even in the first moment, the proposal of Gabriel had vaguely smitten her conscience — startled her moral sense before she could weigh, however hastily, the results of abandoning her friends, her birthplace, her duties — of declassing herself forever — of losing the esteem of all who put trust in her. But now as she thought — seriously thought — she knew that a shame rose and tingled in her face. . . .

No — no — no! — it was not true that her life had been all unhappiness. She began to recall — in shining soft succession — many delightful days. Days of her childhood, above all — with Aimée,

when they played together in the great court of Madame Peyronnette's house in the high street — the beautiful sunny court with its huge-leaved queer plants and potted palms — where the view of the splendid bay lay all open in blue light from the Grosse-Roche to Fond Corré; — with ships coming and going over the horizon, or drowsily swaying at anchor — the court where each morning they used to feed the zanolis, the little green lizards of the tonnelle, who flashed down from the green vault of climbing vines to eat the crumbs thrown them! . . . Aimée, who shared all things with her — even when a tall young lady. Aimée, whose dying hand clasped hers with such loving trust — whose dying lips had whispered: "Youma, O Youma! you will love my child? — Youma, you will never leave her, whatever happens, while she is little? — promise, dear Youma!" . . . And she had — promised. . . .

She saw again the face of Madame Peyronnette, smiling under its bands of silver hair — smiling as when Youma felt her cheek stroked by the fine white hand that glimmered with rings; — as when she heard the gentle assurance: "You are my daughter, too, child — my beautiful dark daughter-in-God! You must be happy; — I want you to be happy!" . . . And had she not really tried to make her so — contrived for her — planned for her — expended much for her sake, that she might never have the right to envy others of her class? . . . And Youma thought of all the gifts, the New-Year sur-

prises — the perpetual comfort. She had always had a room apart — a room overlooking the tonnelle with its vines and pommes-de-liane, where the humming-birds circled in gleams of crimson and emerald — a little chamber full of sea-wind: she had never been allowed to lie on a simple mattress unrolled upon the floor, like a common domestic.

For Aimée's sake she had found scarcely less consideration in her second home, from Madame Desrivières and her son. And ever since Aimée's death, the kindness of M. Desrivières had been that of a father. He had trusted her to such a degree that he had never noticed Gabriel's visits.

. . . What would all these think of her? To whom did she owe most? — to them, whom she had known so long, and the kind lady who had brought her up with her own child, after having named her at the baptismal font; or to Gabriel, whom she had known only for one season? . . . Ah! never — not even for his sake, could she be false to them! — the good God would never forgive her! . . . But Gabriel did not know: if he knew, he could not ask her to fly with him.

. . . Once more the darker side of her nature was quelled — sank back sobbing to its old place. The cruel pain remained: but she lay down to rest that night with a strong resolve to seek Gabriel as soon as possible, and to say *No*.

And nevertheless her heart sank a little next morning, when Gabriel, striding by as she was taking the child to the river, said, in a low, hurried tone:

"Go to the beach this evening, at four o'clock. I will see you there. The gommier leaves for La Trinité with a cargo."

Then he was gone, before she could answer a word.

IX

A STRANGE coast is that on which the valley of Anse-Marine opens — a coast of fantastic capes and rocks with sinister appellations, in which the Devil's name is sometimes mentioned. Black iron ore forms the high cliffs; but countless creepers tapestry them, and lianas everywhere dangle down to meet the shore fringe of patate-bò-lanmè — the vivid green sea-vine — crawling over a sand black as powdered jet. (Its thick leaves when broken show a sap white as milk; and it bears a beautiful carmine cup-shaped flower.) The waves are very long, very heavy; — they crumble over with a crash that deafens, and ghostly uptossings of foam as of waving hands. The sea is never quiet there: north and south the falaises perpetually loom through a haze of tepid spray — rising like smoke to the sun. . . . There is a Creole legend that it was not so in other years; — that a priest, mocked by fishermen, shook his black robe against the sea, and cursed it with the curse of eternal unrest. And the fishing-boats and the spread nets rotted on the beach, while men vainly waited for the sea to calm. . . . The foam-line never vanishes through the year: it only broadens or narrows, as the surf becomes, under the pressure of the trade-winds, more or less dangerous. Sometimes it whitens far up the river mouths, leaps to the summit of the cliffs, and shakes all the land — though there is

scarcely a breeze, and not one cloud in the sky. At such a time you will see that far out, even to the horizon, the flood is blue as lapis-lazuli, and smooth as a mirror: the thunder and the foaming do not extend beyond the coast. That is a raz-de-marée — a raz-de-marée du fond: the sea swinging from the depths — rocking from the bottom. This spectacle may endure two, three, four days; and then cease mysteriously as it began.

For the travailleur of the eastern plantations, the only barrier between slavery and freedom was this wild sea. There were but few boats on the coast; — north of La Trinité, there were but few points from which a boat could be safely launched. But at Anse-Marine there was one such place — a sort of natural cove in a promontory projecting into deep water from the southern end of the valley-opening, and curving so as to give a lee side. It was thence the gommier was launched to the sound of the drum; and a little boat was also kept there in a shed — the master's private boat — seldom used. This Gabriel knew how to handle well.

. . . Before the hour appointed, Youma took Mayotte to the beach: the great heat of the day was spent, the strong wind was almost cool, and the cliffs were throwing shadow. A visit to this shore was a delight for the child. There were no pretty little shells like those thrown up by the tide at the Grosse Roche of Saint Pierre, and the surf was too

strong to permit of her wading, as she would have wished to do. But it was a joy to see it tumbling and flashing; and the black sand was full of funny yellow hairy-legged crabs, and little sea-roaches — ravett-lanmè — which had spades in their tails, to dig holes with; — and sometimes one might meet a baby turtle, just out of the egg, making its way to the water.

The children came soon after — black and yellow, brown and red — all in charge of Tanga's daughters, Zoune and Gambi, to see the gommier go out. The little ones were not allowed to venture fairly into the water for fear of accidents; but they could gambol on the skirts of the surf to their hearts' content. They screamed and leaped all together whenever a big wave would chase up the sand, whirling and hissing about their little bare feet.

Then the wagons appeared, moving along the cliff road, with their loads of rum and sugar: it was hard work for the mules, strong and fat as they were. . . . Youma heard Gabriel's voice urging them on — helping the drivers.

Then a slim brown boy, naked as a bronze, appeared on horseback — coming down to the beach at a gallop, riding without a saddle. It was the overseer's little groom, going to give M. de Comislles's horse a bath in the surf. The boy was scarcely more than a child, and the animal — a black Porto Rico stallion — very spirited; but the two knew each other. As the surf reached the horse's knees,

the lad leaped down, and began to wash him. Then an immense breaker bursting, whelmed both almost out of sight in a quivering woolly sheet of foam. The horse seemed to like it, never moved: there was no fear for the boy — he could swim like a couliou. He played about the horse, patted him, hugged his neck, threw water on him: when a heavy breaker came he would cling to the stallion's mane.

"Yo kallé! yo kallé!" cried the children at last, as a drum-roll vibrated from the launching-place: the freight had been stowed, the crew were in their places, the tambouyé on his perch. It was the signal to let go — "lagué toutt"; and all eyes turned to see the gommier rush into the water; and everybody shouted as she reached it safely, pitched, steadied again with the first plunge of the paddles, and started on her journey, to the merry measure of Madame lézhabitant. The children stopped their play to watch; — and from the cliffs sounded a clapping of hands, and women's laughter, and jocose screams of adié — as the long craft shot away to the open — till the chant of the crew was lost in the voice of the surf, and the faces ceased to be distinguishable. Even then, for a minute or two the booming of the drum could be heard; but the gommier soon rounded the long point, and passed out of sight, making south. . . . The event of the day was over.

Tanga's daughters gathered their little flock, and left the beach; — the boy in the surf leaped to the

horse's back, turned him, and off they went up the valley at a gallop — shining like a group in metal — to dry themselves in wind and sun; — the lookers-on disappeared from the cliffs; — and the empty wagons turned back rumbling to the plantation. . . . Youma still lingered, to Mayotte's great satisfaction. The child had found a cocoanut — empty, shrunken, and blackened by long pitching about in the waves. She amused herself by rolling it into the surf, and seeing it cast out again — always at some distance from where it had been thrown in; — and this so much diverted her that she did not notice Gabriel hastening toward them. . . . But Youma advanced to meet him.

"Doudoux-moin," he said, breathing quickly with the hurry of his coming, as he took her hand in both his own — "listen well to what I am going to tell you. . . . The gommier has gone; — there will be no boat to pursue us: we can go to-night if you will be brave . . . To-morrow we can be free — to-morrow morning, doudoux!"

"Ah! Gabriel . . ." she began. But he would not hear her: he spoke on so earnestly, so rapidly, that she could not interrupt him, telling her his hopes, his plans. He had a little money — knew what he was going to do. They would buy a little place in the country (it was a beautiful country there, and everything was cheap, and there were no serpents!) — he could build a little house himself — plant a fruit garden. . . . The master's boat was ready for

their escape; — wind and sea were in their favor; — there would be no moon till after midnight; — there was nothing to fear. And with the coming sunrise they would be free.

He spoke of his love for her — of the life they might live together — of liberty as he imagined it — of their children who would be free — with naïve power of persuasion, and with a fullness that revealed how earnestly and long he had nourished his dream — vividly imaging his thought by those strange Creole words which, like tropic lizards, change color with position. Not until he had said all that was in his heart, could Youma answer him, with the tears running down her cheeks:

"Oh! Gabriel! I cannot go! — Do not tell me any more; I cannot go!" . . .

Then she stopped — struck dumb by the sudden change in his face. As he dropped her hand, there was an expression in his eyes she had never seen before. But he did not fix them upon her: he turned, and folded his arms, and stared at the sea.

"Doudoux," she went on — "you would not let me speak. . . . I did as you told me; — I thought it all over — over and over again. And the more I thought about it, the more I felt it could not be. . . . And you would not give me a chance to tell you" — she repeated, pleadingly — touching his arm — trying to draw his look again.

But he did not answer — stood rigid and grim as the black rock behind him — looking always to the

horizon, where the place of his hope had been — free Dominica, with its snakeless valleys — all viewless now, veiled by the vapors of evening.

"Gabriel," she persisted, caressingly, "listen, doudoux." . . .

"Ah! you will not come?" he said at last — "you will not come?" . . . There was almost a menace in his voice, as he turned the wrath of his eyes upon her.

"I cannot go, doudoux," she repeated, with gentle force. "Listen to me . . . you know I love you?"

"Pa pàlé ça! — pa lapeine!" he answered, bitterly. . . . "I offer you all that I have; — it is not enough for you. . . . I give you the chance to be free with me, and you tell me you prefer to remain a slave."

"Oh, Gabriel!" she sobbed — "can you reproach me like that? You know in your heart whether I love you."

"Then you are afraid — afraid of the sea?"

"It is not that." . . .

"Ouill, mafi! — I thought you brave!"

"Gabriel," she cried, almost fiercely, "I am not afraid of anything except of doing wrong — I am afraid of the Bon-Dié only."

"Qui Bon-Dié ça?" he scoffed — "the Bon-Dié of the békés? — the Bon-Dié of Manm-Peyronnette?"

"You shall not talk that kind of talk to me, Gabriel!" she exclaimed, with eyes blazing — "it brings bad luck!"

He looked at her in surprise at the sudden change in her manner, as, for the first time, her will rose to match his own.

"Ça ka pòté malhè, ou tenne?" she repeated, meeting his gaze and mastering it. He turned sullenly to the sea again, and let her speak — listening restively to her passionate explanation. . . . Afraid? — how little he knew her heart! But she had forgotten, because of him, what it was wicked to forget. She had done wrong even to think of going with him — forsaking the godmother who had brought her up from an infant — deserting the mistress who had cared for her like a daughter — abandoning the child confided to her care, the child of Madame Desrivières, the child who loved her so much, who would suffer so much to lose her — might even die; for she knew of a little one who had died for grief at having lost her da. No: it would be cruel — it would be wicked, to leave her in such a way. . . .

"And you leave me for a child, Youma — a child not your own?" cried Gabriel. "You talk as if you were the only nurse in the world: there are plenty of das."

"Not like me," said Youma — "not at least for her. I have been mother to her since her own mother died. . . . But it is not the child only, Gabriel; — it is what I owe to those who loved and trusted me all these years." . . . And the old sweetness came back into her voice, while she asked: "Doudoux, could you think me true, and see me thankless

and false to those who have been good to me all my life?"

"Good to you!" he burst out, with sudden bitterness. "Do you think them good because they do not happen to be bad? How good to you? Because they dress you beautifully — give you a belle jupe, a calendered madras, a collier-choux, and put gold upon you that folks may cry: 'See how madame . . . see how monsieur is generous to a slave!' Give them? — no! — lend them only — put them upon you for a showing: they are not yours! You can own nothing; you are a slave; you are naked as a worm before the law! You have no right to anything — no, not even to what I gave you; — you have no right to become the wife of the man you choose; — you would have no right, if a mother, to care for your own child — though you give half your life, all your youth, to nursing children of békés. . . . No, Youma, you were not brought up like your mistress's daughter. Why were you never taught what white ladies know? — why were you never shown how to read and write? — why are you kept a slave? . . . Good to you? It was to their interest, my girl! — it repays them to-day — since it keeps you with them — when you could be free with me."

"No, no, doudoux," protested the girl — "you are not just! You do not know my godmother; you do not know what she has been for me; — you could never make me believe she has not been generous and kind! . . . Do you think, Gabriel, that

people can be good only for a motive? — do you think M. Desrivières has not been kind to you?"

"There are good békés, Youma; — there are masters who are better masters than others: there is no good master!"

"Oh, Gabriel! — and M. Desrivières?"

"Do you believe slavery is a good thing — a right thing, Youma?"

She could not answer him directly. The ethical question of slavery had first been brought to her mind in a vague way by her recent disappointment; — previously the subject would have seemed to her one of those into which it was not quite proper to inquire doubtingly.

"I think it is wicked to be cruel to slaves," she replied. . . . "But since the good God arranged it so that there should be slaves and masters, doudoux . . ."

"Ou trop sott! — ou trop enfant!" — he cried out, and held his peace; feeling that it were vain to argue with her — that what he called her folly and her childishness separated them far more than the will of a mistress. Her idea of duty to her godmother, of duty to the child, appeared to be mingled in some way with her idea of religion — to which the least light allusion would provoke her anger. He could comprehend it only as a sort of mental weakness created by béké-teaching. To his own thinking, slavery was a kind of trickery — the duping of blacks by whites; and it was simply because they

could not dupe him, that they had given him a position entailing no physical labor, and in which he could feel himself more free than others. He did not feel grateful therefor: it seemed to him that no possible kindnesses, no imaginable indulgences on the part of a master could deserve the voluntary sacrifice of a chance for liberty by the slave. Though really possessing a rude intelligence above his comrades, Gabriel shared many savage traits of his race — traits that three hundred years of colonial servitude could hardly modify: among others, the hatred of all constraint — reasonable or unreasonable. Still the Creole bitaco prefers hungry liberty to any comfort obtainable by hired labor; — his refusal to work for wages necessitated the importation of coolies, yet he can do the work of three; — he is capable of prodigious physical effort; he will carry on his head twenty miles to town a load of vegetables of his own weight, or twenty-four bread-fruits; he will cutlass his way through forest to the very summit of peaks to find particular herbs and cabbage-palm for the market; he will do anything extraordinary to avoid being under orders — martyrize his body by herculean efforts to escape control. . . . This spirit in Gabriel had been temporarily softened by the profits and petty dignity of his position — by the ambition of being one day able to settle on his own land in some wild place, and live independent of everybody; — but not the least of the reasons which made him valuable at

Anse-Marine was his confidence of being able to escape when he pleased. . . . And, nevertheless, judging Youma by himself, the very motive she had urged for her refusal seemed to him the one of all others he could not reason with her against, because he coupled it with his own ideas of the supernatural — likened it to certain dark superstitions of which he knew the extraordinary power. Through her kindheartedness, the békés had been able to impose upon her mind; — and tenderness of heart, except to him and for him alone, he deemed childish and foolish. . . . "C'est bon khè crabe qui lacause y pa ni tête," says the negro proverb. (It is because of the crab's good heart that he lacks a head.)

Nevertheless he himself had a heart — though a rough one; — and it was moved by the sight of Youma's silent tears which his anger and his reproaches had caused. He loved her well in his hard way; and all his tenacity of will set itself against the losing of her. She had denied his wish; and he knew her strength of resolve — yet with time he might find another way to make her his own. Something would depend on herself — on such influence as she might have with her mistress; but he relied more upon the probability of a social change. Hopeless as he had pictured the future for Youma, he was far from believing it hopeless. Echoes of the words and work of philanthropists had reached him: he knew how and why the English slaves had received their freedom; — he knew also

something of which he could not speak, even in a whisper, to Youma. . . . From plantation to plantation there had passed a secret message — framed in African speech for the ears of those chosen to know and fearless to do; — already, even within the remotest valleys of the colony, hearts had been strangely stirred by the blowing of the great wind of Emancipation. . . .

"Doudoux-moin!" he suddenly entreated, in a tone of tenderness such as she had never heard him use — "pa pleiré conm ça, chè — non!" And she felt him drawing her close in a contrite caress. . . . "It was not with you, little heart, that I was angry! — listen: there are things you do not know, child; but I believe you — you are doing what you think is right. . . . Pa pleiré — non! — ti bigioule moin! . . . Listen: since you will not come, I will not go; — I will stay here at Anse-Marine. . . . Pa pleiré, doudoux!"

A little while she sobbed in his embrace without replying; then she murmured:

"I shall be more happy, doudoux, to know that you do not go. . . . But it is not a time to be angry, dear, when we must say good-bye for always."

"Ah! my little wasp! Will you let them choose another husband for you, when they have you back in Saint Pierre?" he asked, with a smile of confidence.

"Gabriel!" she cried, passionately — "they can never do that! . . . If they will not let me have you,

doudoux, I will remain forever as I am. . . . No! — they cannot do that!"

"Bon, ti khè-moin! — then it is not good-bye for always. . . . Wait!"

She looked up, wondering. . . . But in the same moment, Mayotte, tired of playing with her cocoa-nut, and seeing Gabriel, ran to them screaming, "Gabou! — Gabou!" — and clung delightedly to the commandeur's knee.

"No! — go and play a little while longer," said Youma. "Gabou is too tired to be pulled about."

"Are you, Gabou?" asked Mayotte straining her little head back to look up to his face. And without waiting for his answer, she went on to tell him: "Oh! Gabou! we are going back to town with papoute!"

"He knows that," said Youma; "go and play."

"But, da, I am tired!" she answered, discontentedly, still clinging to Gabriel's knee, expecting him to toss her up in his arms. . . . "Pouend moin!" she coaxed — "take me up! — take me up!"

"Pauv piti, màgré ça!" exclaimed Gabriel, lifting her to the level of his great bronze face — "you do not care one bit that you are going to leave Gabou and all your dear friends at Anse-Marine — piess, piess, piti mechante! — you do not love Gabou!"

"Yes, I do!" she cooed, patting his dark cheeks — "I do love you, Gabou!"

"Allé! — ti scuyè! — you love Gabou to play with you: that is all! And Gabou has no time to play with you now; — Gabou must go and see what

everybody is doing, before it is time to sound the cònelambi. . . . Bo! — Adié, cocotte."

He placed her in her nurse's arms, and kissed Youma also — but on the forehead only, as he had seen M. Desrivières do . . . because of the child. . . . "Adié, ti khè!"

"Pou toujou?" she murmured, almost inaudibly, vainly struggling with the emotion which stifled her voice — "for always?"

"Ah! non, chè!" he answered, smiling to give her hope. . . . "Mône pa k'encontré; — moune k'encontré toujou." (Only the mornes never meet; — folk always meet again.)

X

. . . WOULD she ever see him again? she asked herself unceasingly through all her wakefulness of that night — her last save one at Anse-Marine. But always came the self-answer of tears. . . . She heard the number of the hour at which she might have fled with him to freedom, and hour after hour, tingled out by the little bronze salon timepiece through its vaulted glass. She closed her eyes — and still, as through their shut lids, saw the images of the evening: the figure of Gabriel, and Mayotte playing with her cocoanut, and the velvet shadowing of the black cliffs on the black sand, and a white sheeting and leaping of surf — silent like breakings of cloud. They went and came — distorted and vanished and returned again with startling vividness, as if they would never fade utterly away. Only in the first hours of the morning there began for her that still soft darkness which is rest from thought.

But again a little while, and her mind wakened to the fancy of a voice calling her name — faintly, as from a great distance — a voice remembered as in a dream one holds remembrance of dreams gone before.

Then she became aware of a face — the face of a beautiful brown woman looking at her with black soft eyes — smiling under the yellow folds of a madras turban — and lighted by a light that came

from nowhere — that was only a memory of some long-dead morning. And through the dimness round about it a soft blue radiance grew — the ghost of a day; and she knew the face and murmured to it: "Doudoux-manman." . . .

. . . They two were walking somewhere she had been long ago — somewhere among mornes: she felt the guiding of her mother's hand as when a child.

And before them as they went, something purple and vague and vast rose and spread — the enormous spectre of the sea, rounding to the sky. And in the pearliness over its filmy verge there loomed again the vision of the English island, with long shreddings of luminous cloud across its violet peaks. . . . Slowly it brightened and slowly changed its color as she gazed; and all the peaks flushed crimson to their tips — like a budding of wondrous roses from sea to sun. . . .

And Douceline, softly speaking, as to an infant, said:

"Travail Bon-Dié toutt joli, anh?" (Is it not all-pretty, the work of the Good-God?)

"Oh! my little jewel-mamma — ti-bijou-manman! — oh! my little-heart-mamma — ti-khè-manman! . . . I must not go!" . . .

. . . But Douceline was no longer with her — and the shining shadow of the island had also passed away — and she heard the voice of Mayotte crying . . . somewhere behind trees.

And she hastened there, and found her, under

some huge growth that spread out coiling roots far and wide: one could not discern what tree it was for the streaming weight of lianas upon it. The child had plucked a sombre leaf, and was afraid — something so strange had trickled upon her fingers.

"It is only the blood-liana," said Youma: "they dye with it." . . .

"But it is warm," said the child — still full of fear. . . . Then both became afraid because of a heavy pulsing sound, dull as the last flappings of a cannon-echo among the mornes. The earth shook with it. And the light began to fail — dimmed into a red gloom, as when the sun dies.

"It is the tree!" gasped Mayotte — "*the heart of a tree!*"

But they could not go: a weird numbness weighed their feet to the ground.

And suddenly the roots of the tree bestirred with frightful life, and reached out writhing to wrap about them; — and the black gloom of branches above them became a monstrous swarming; — and the ends of the roots and the ends of the limbs had eyes. . . .

. . . And through the ever-deepening darkness came the voice of Gabriel, crying — "*It is a Zombi! — I cannot cut it!*"

XI

THE season of heavy humid heat and torrential rains — the long hivernage — had passed with its storms; — and the season of northeast winds, when the heights grow cool; — and the season of dryness, when the peaks throw off their wrappings of cloud. It was the renouveau, the most delicious period of the year — that magical spring-time of the tropics, when the land suddenly steeps itself in iridescent vapor, and all distances become jewel-tinted, while nature renews her saps after the bleaching and withering of the dry months, and rekindles all her colors. The forests covered themselves at once with fruit and flowers; the shriveled lianas revived their luminous green, put forth new million tendrils, and over the heights of the grands bois poured down cataracts of blue, white, pink, and yellow blossom. The palmistes and the angelins appeared to grow suddenly taller as they shook off their dead plumes; — an aureate haze hung over the valleys of ripe cane; — and mountain roads began to turn green almost to their middle under the immense invasion of newborn grasses, herbs, and little bushes. . . . Mosses and lichens sprouted everywhere upon surfaces of stone or timber unprotected by paint; — grasses shot up through the jointing of basaltic pavements; and, simultaneously, tough bright

plants burst into life from all the crevices of walls and roofs, attacking even the solid masonry of fortifications, compelling man to protect his work. An infinite variety: ferns and capillaria and vines that sink their tendrils into the hardest rock; — the thé-miraille, and the mousse-miraille; the pourpier and the wild guava; the fleuri-Noël, the Devil's tobacco (tabac-diabe), and the lakhératt; — even little trees, that must be removed at once for the safety of dwellings — such as the young fromager or silk-cotton — rose from wall tops and roofs — branching from the points of gables — rooting upon ridges and cornices. . . . The enormous cone of Pelée, which through the weeks of north winds had outlined the cusps of its cratered head against the blue light, once more drew down the clouds about it, and changed the tawny tone of its wrinkled slopes to lush green. Soft thunders rolled among the hills; tepid dashes of rain refreshed the earth at intervals; — the air grew sweet with balsamic scents; — the color of the sky itself deepened.

But though the land might put forth all its bewitchment, the hearts of the colonists were heavy. For the first time in many years the magnificent crop was being gathered with difficulty: there were mills silent for the want of arms to feed them. For the first time in centuries the slave might refuse to obey, and the master fear to punish. The Republic had been proclaimed; and the promise of emancipation had aroused in the simple minds of the

negroes a ferment of fantastic ideas — free gifts of plantations — free donations of wealth — perpetual repose unearned — paradise life for all. They had seen the common result of freedom accorded for services exceptional; — they were familiar with the life of the free classes; — but such evidence had small value for them: the liberty given by the béké resembled in nothing that peculiar quality of liberty to be accorded by the Republic!

They had dangerous advisers, unfortunately, to nourish such imaginings: men of color who foresaw in the coming social transformation larger political opportunities. The situation had totally changed since the time when slaves and freedmen fought alike on the side of the planters against Rochambeau and republicanism, against the bourgeoisie and the patriotes. The English capture of the island had justified that distrust of the first Revolution shown by the hommes de couleur, and had preserved the old régime for another half-century. But during that half-century the free class of color had obtained all the privileges previously refused it by prejudice or by caution; and the interests of the gens de couleur had 'ceased to be inseparably identified with those of the whites. They had won all that was possible to win by the coalition; and they now knew the institution of slavery doomed beyond hope, not by the mere fiat of a convention, but by the opinion of the nineteenth century. And the promise of universal suffrage had been given. There were scarcely

twelve thousand whites; — there were one hundred and fifty thousand blacks and half-breeds.

Yet there was nothing in the aspect or attitude of the slave population which could fully have explained to a stranger the alarm of the whites. The subject race had not only been physically refined by those extraordinary influences of climate and environment which produce the phenomena of creolization; but the more pleasing characteristics of the original savage nature — its emotional artlessness, its joyousness, its kindliness, its quickness to sympathy, its capacity to find pleasure in trifles — had been cultivated and intensified by slavery. The very speech of the population — the curious patois shaped in the mould of a forgotten African tongue, and liquefied with fullness of long vowel sounds — caressed the ear like the cooing of pigeons. . . . Even to-day the stranger may find in the gentler traits of this exotic humanity an indescribable charm — despite all those changes of character wrought by the vastly increased difficulties of life under the new conditions. Only the Creole knows by experience the darker possibilities of the same semi-savage nature: its sudden capacities of cruelty — its blind exaltations of rage — its stampede-furies of destruction.

. . . Before the official announcement of political events reached the colony, the negroes — through some unknown system of communication swifter than Government vessels — knew their prospects,

knew what was being done for them, felt themselves free. A prompt solution of the slavery question was more than desirable; — delay was becoming dangerous. There were as yet no hostile manifestations; — but the slave-owners — knowing the history of those sudden uprisings which revealed an unsuspected power of organization and a marvelous art of secrecy — felt the air full of menace, and generally adopted a policy of caution and forbearance. But in a class accustomed to command there will always be found men whose anger makes light of prudence, and whose resolve challenges all consequences. Such a one among the planters of 1848 dared to assert his rights even on the eve of emancipation; — chastised with his own hand the slave who refused to work, and sent him to the city prison to await the judgment of a law that might at any moment become obsolete.

His rashness precipitated the storm. The travailleurs began to leave the plantations, and to mass in armed bands upon the heights overlooking Saint Pierre. The populace of the city rose in riot, burst into the cutlass stores and seized the weapons, surrounded the jail and demanded the release of the prisoner. . . . "Si ou pa lagué y, ké ouè! — nou ké fai toutt nègue'bitation descenne!" That terrible menace first revealed the secret understanding between the slaves of the port and the blacks of the plantation; — the officers of the law recoiled before the threat, and turned their prisoner loose.

But the long-suppressed passion of the subject

class was not appeased: the mob continued to parade the streets, uttering cries never heard before — "Mort aux blancs! — À bas les békés!" . . . feeling secured from military interference by the recognized cowardice of a republican governor. Evening found the riot still unquelled — the whites imprisoned in their residences, or fleeing for refuge to the ships in the harbor. And those dwelling on the hills, keeping watch, heard all through the night the rallying ouklé of negroes striding by, armed with cutlasses and bamboo pikes and bottles filled with sand. Twenty-four hours later, the whole slave-population of the island was in revolt; and the towns were threatened with a general descent of the travailleurs.

XII

ANOTHER day found the situation still more sinister. All business was suspended; every store and warehouse closed; even the markets remained empty; the bakeries had been pillaged, and provisions had become almost unobtainable. A rumor was abroad that emancipation had been voted — that the news was being concealed — that the official proclamation of freedom could be enforced only by an appeal to arms. . . .

Prior to the outbreak there had been a fierce heat of political excitement, created by the republican election. The white slave-holders had voted for a freedman faithful to their interests; the men of color had used their freshly acquired privileges to secure representation in the person of a noted French abolitionist. Pictures of him had been distributed by thousands, together with republican cockades and tiny tricolored flags: the people kissed the pictures with tears of enthusiasm and shouts of "Vive papa!" — the colored children waved the little flags and cried: "Vive la République!" — some were so young they could only cry, "Vive la 'Ipipi!" And the complete victory of the hommes de couleur only intensified the exaltation. . . . But after the affair of the jail, the children ceased to appear in the streets with their little flags; and there was no longer a distribution of cockades, but a distribution

of cutlasses — new cutlasses, for they had to be sharpened, and all the grindstones were in requisition.

. . . It became more and more perilous for the whites to show themselves in the streets. They watched for chances to get to the ships, under the protection of their own slaves or of loyal freedman, having influence with the populace, knowing every dark face in it. But after midday such faithful servants began to find their devotion unavailing: strange negroes were mingling with the rioters — savage-looking men, whom the city domestics had never seen before, and who replied to the assurance "C'est yon bon béké" (this is a *good* white) only by abuse or violence. Armed bands incessantly paraded — beating drums — chanting — shouting, "À bas les békés!" — watching for a fugitive to challenge with the phrase — "Eh! citoyen . . . citoyenne . . . arrête! Je te parle!" — affecting French speech for the pleasure of the insulting tutoiement. They peered for white faces at windows, cursed them, clamored: "Mi! ausouè-à ké debrayé ou!" — gesturing with knives as if opening fish. Some great aggressive movement seemed to be preparing; and the travailleurs were always massing upon the heights. The whites who could not flee, feeling their lives in danger — tried to prepare for defense: in some houses the women and girls made ball-cartridges. Slaves betrayed these preparations; and a rumor circulated that the békés were secretly

organizing to attack the mob. . . . The time was long past when the whites could suppress a riot, and hang men of color to the mango-trees of the Batterie d'Esnotz; but what they had done in other days was remembered against them.

It was in the Quarter of the Fort — the most ancient part of the city, situated on an eminence, and isolated by the Rivière Roxelane — that the white Creoles found themselves least safe from attack. It was especially difficult for them to reach the ships: the bridges and all approaches to the shore being crowded with armed negroes. The greater number of the houses were small, and could offer little protection if besieged; — and many persons preferred to leave their own homes and seek asylum in the few large dwellings of the district. Among such were the Desrivières family, who found refuge with their relatives the de Kersaints. The de Kersaint residence was unusually roomy — not more than two full stories high, but long, broad, and built with the solidity of a stronghold. It stood at the verge of the old quarter, in a steeply sloping street, descending westward so as to leave a great half-disk of sea visible above the roofs, and ascending eastward to join a country road leading to the interior. The windows of the rear overlooked vast cane-fields, extending far up the flanks of the Montagne Pelée, whose clouded crest towered fifteen miles away.

There were more than thirty persons assembled for safety at the de Kersaints' — mostly wives and

daughters of relatives; and there was serious alarm among these. In the forenoon the servants had deserted the house — one of them, a negress, irritated by some reproach, had left with the threat: "Ausouè ou ké ouè — attenne!" (Wait! you will see to-night!) M. de Kersaint, an old gentleman of seventy, who, seconded by his son, had made the fugitives as comfortable as was possible, strove to calm their fears. He believed the night would bring nothing worse than a great increase of noise and menace: he did not think the leaders of the city populace intended more than intimidation. There might be a general descent of the plantation hands — that would be a graver danger; but there were five hundred troops in the neighboring barracks. No criminal violence had yet occurred in the quarter: it was reported that a gentleman had been killed in the other end of the city — but there were so many wild reports!

. . . As a fact, the whites of the Fort — mostly deserted by their slaves and domestics — knew little of what was going on even in their immediate vicinity. Things that for two hundred years had been done in darkness and secrecy were now being done openly in the light. An occult power had suddenly assumed unquestioned sway — the power of the African sorcerer.

Under the tamarinds of the Place du Fort, a quimboiseur plied his ghastly calling — selling amulets, selling fetiches, selling magical ointments made

of the grease of serpents. Before him stood an open cask filled with tafia mingled with gunpowder and thickened with bodies of crushed wasps. About him crowded the black men of the port — the half-nude gabarriers, wont to wield oars twenty-five feet long; — the herculean nèguegouôs-bois, brutalized by the labor of paddling their massive and awkward craft; — tough canotiers, whose skins of bronze scarcely bead in the hottest summer sun; — the crews of the yôles and the sabas and the gommiers; — the men of the cooperies, and the cask rollers, and the stowers; — and the fishers of tonne — and the fishers of sharks. "Ça qui lè?" shouted the quimboiseur, serving out the venom in cups of tin — "Ça qui lè vini bouè y?... Who will drink it, the Soul of a Man? — the Spirit of Combat? — the Essence of Falling to Rise? — the Heart-Mover? — the Hell-Breaker?"... And they clamored for it, swallowed it — the wasps and the gunpowder and the alcohol — drinking themselves into madness.

... Sunset yellowed the sky — filled the horizon with flare of gold; — the sea changed its blue to lilac; — the mornes brightened their vivid green to a tone so luminous that they seemed turning phosphorescent. Rapidly the glow crimsoned — shadows purpled; and night spread swiftly from the east — black-violet and full of stars.

Even as the last vermilion light began to fade, there sounded from the Place du Fort a long, weird, hollow call, that echoed sobbingly through all the

hills like an enormous moan. Then another — from the Mouillage; — another — from the river-mouth; — and others, interblending, from the pirogues and the gabarres and the sabas of the harbor: the blowing of a hundred lambi-shells — the negroes of the city calling to their brethren of the hills. . . . So still, the fishers of sharks, from the black coast of Prêcheur, call the travailleurs of the heights to descend and divide the flesh.

And other moaning signals responded faintly — from the valley of the Roxelane and the terraces of Perrinelle — from the Morne d'Orange and the Morne Mirail and the Morne Labelle: the travailleurs were coming! . . . And from the market-place, where by lantern-light the sorcerer still gave out his léssence-brisé-lenfè, and his amulets and grease of serpents, began to reverberate ominously the heavy pattering of a tamtam.

Barricaded within their homes, the whites of the lower city could hear the tumult of the gathering. . . . Masters and slaves alike were haunted by a dream of blood and fire — the memory of Hayti.

XIII

At the de Kersaints' all the apartments of the upper floor had been given up to the fugitives, except one front room where the men remained on watch: many of the women and young girls preferred to sit up with them rather than seek repose. Downstairs all the windows and doors had been securely closed; and it was decided to extinguish all lights during the passing of a mob. Then was converse on the events of the preceding day, the late election, prospects of emancipation, the history of former uprisings — some of which the older men remembered well — and on the character of negroes. This topic brought out a series of anecdotes — some sinister, but mostly droll. A planter in the little assembly related a story about one of his own slaves who had saved enough money to buy a cow. At the first announcement of the political change in France he took the cow out of the field and tied it to the porch of his master's house. "Pouki ou marré vache lanmaison?" (Why do you tie the cow to the house?) asked the planter. . . . "Moin ka marré vache lanmaison, maîte, pace yo ka proclamé la repiblique — pisse you fois repiblique à proclamé, zaffai ta yon c'est ta toutt." (Master, I tie the cow to the house because they proclaim the Republic — for once that the Republic is proclaimed, the belongings of one are the belongings of everybody.) In spite of the general anxiety,

this narrative provoked laughter. Then, the conversation taking another turn, M. Desrivières told the story of Youma and the serpent — there being many present who had not heard of the incident before. The young capresse, who sat with Mayotte on her knees, arose with the child, and left the apartment before M. Desrivières had ended his recital. A few minutes later he followed her into the adjoining room, called her away from the little one, and said to her, in an undertone which could not reach the child's ears:

"Youma, my daughter, the street is very quiet now; and I think it will be better for you to leave the child with my mother, and pass the night with our colored neighbors. . . . I can open the door for you."

"Why, master?" . . . She had never asked him why before.

"Mafi," he answered, with a caress in his eyes, "I cannot ask you to stay with us to-night. There is danger for all of us," he added, sinking his voice to a whisper: "we may be attacked."

"That is why I wish to stay, master." . . . This time she spoke aloud and firmly.

"Oh! papa!" cried Mayotte, coming between them — "do not send her anywhere! — I want her to tell me stories!"

"Little egotist!" said M. Desrivières, stooping to kiss her — "and if Youma wishes to go?" . . .

"You do not — do you, da?" asked the child in

surprise. She imagined herself at a sort of evening pleasure party.

"I will stay to tell you stories," said Youma. . . . M. Desrivières pressed her hand, and left her with the child.

. . . As M. Desrivières announced, the street had become very quiet. It was one of the most retired: during the day there had been no gatherings in it; — some bands of negroes had passed from time to time shouting "À bas les békés!" — but since nightfall the disorderly element had disappeared. White citizens ventured to open their windows and look abroad. They heard the blowing of the lambi-shells without guessing its meaning — imagined some fresh excitement in the direction of the harbor. Nevertheless, all became more anxious. The rushing of the water along the steep gutters — the mountain water purifying every street — seemed to sound unusually loud.

"It always makes a great noise in this street," said M. de Kersaint — "there is so much incline."

"I think we are all more or less nervous to-night," said another gentleman.

But Youma, suddenly returning alone to the room where the men conversed, pointed to the windows, and exclaimed:

"It is not the water!"

The ears of the half-breed have a singular keenness to sounds. . . . All talk ceased: the men held their breath to listen.

XIV

A HEAVY murmur, as of far surf, filled the street — slowly loudened — became a dull unbroken roar. From the heights it seemed to approach, and with it a glow, as of conflagration. . . . At once in every house the lights were extinguished, the windows closed, the doors secured; — the street became desolate as a cemetery. But from behind the slatted shutters of upper rooms all could watch the brightening of the light, hear the coming of the roar. . . .

"Yo ka vini!" cried Youma.

And into the high street suddenly burst a storm of clamorings, a blaze of torch fires — as a dense mass of black men in canvas trousers, hundreds naked to the waist, came moving at a run: the downpour of the travailleurs. Under the shock of their bare feet the dwellings trembled: — through all the walls a vibration passed, as of a faint earthquake. . . . If they would only go by!

Hundreds had already passed; and still the rushing vision seemed without end, the cascading of great straw hats interminable; — and over the torrent of it the steel of pikes and plantation forks and brandished cutlasses flickered in the dancing of torch fires. But there came an unexpected halt — a struggling and shouldering, a stifling pressure — a half lull in the tempest of shouting; while the street filled with a sinister odor of alcohol — a stench of

tafia. Evidently the mob was drunk, and being so, doubly dangerous. . . . Some one had given an order, which nobody could fully hear; a stentorian voice repeated it, as the tumult subsided: "Là! — làmênm! — caïe béké!" All the black faces turned to the dwelling of the de Kersaints; and all the black throats roared again. Unfortunately the imposing front of the building — the only two-story edifice in a street of cottages — had signaled out its proprietors as rich békés. To be a béké, a white, and to be rich, was, in the belief of the simple travailleur at least, to be an aristocrat, an enemy of emancipation — most likely a slave-holder. . . . "Fouillé là!" (Search there!) the same immense voice pealed; — and the whole house shook to a furious knocking at the main entrance, of which the massive double doors were secured by an iron bar, as well as by lock and bolt. "Ouvé! — ouvé ba nou!" (Open for us!) shouted the crowd.

M. de Kersaint unfastened a shutter of one of the upper front rooms, and looked down upon the mob. It was an appalling mob; — there were nightmare-faces in it. Most of the visages were unfamiliar; but some he could recognize — faces of the port: many of the roughest city class had joined the travailleurs before their descent. There were women also in the mob — gesticulating, screaming: some were plantation negresses; others were not — and these were the worst. . . .

"Ça oulé, méfi?" asked M. de Kersaint.

The first time they could not hear him for the uproar; but it soon calmed at the sight of the white-haired béké at the window: everybody wanted to listen. M. de Kersaint was not seriously alarmed; — he did not believe the crowd could dare more than a brutal manifestation — what in the patois is termed a voum. He repeated in Creole:

"What do you want, my sons?" . . . It was thus the béké addressed the slave; — in his lips the word monfi had an almost patriarchal meaning of affection and protection: its use survives even in these republican years. But as uttered in that moment by M. de Kersaint, it fell upon the political passion of the mob like oil on fire.

"Ou sé pè-nou, anh?" — laughed a mocker: "Are you our father? . . . There are no more 'my sons': there are only citizens — anni cittoyen!"

"Y trop souyé! — y trop malin!" screamed a woman's voice. "He wants to flatter us, the old béké! — he is too sly!"

"Cittoyens, pouloss," responded M. de Kersaint. "Why do you want to break into my house? Have I ever done harm to any of you?"

"You have arms in the house!" answered the same menacing voice that had first directed the attention of the populace to the dwelling. It rang from the chest of a very tall negro, who seemed to be the leader of the riot: he wore only a straw hat and cotton trousers, and carried a cutlass. All at once M. de Kersaint remembered having seen him before

— working on the plantation of Fond-Laillet, as commandeur.

"Sylvain, my son," answered M. de Kersaint, "we have no arms here. But we have women and children here. We have nothing to do with your wrongs."

"Ouvé ba nou!"

"None of you have any right to enter my house."

"Ouvé ba nou!"

"You have no right" . . .

"Ah! we will take the right!" shouted the leader; and a general roar went up — thousands of excited voices reiterating the demand, "Ouvé ba nou!"

The white head withdrew from the window, and a young face appeared at it — dark, handsome, and resolute; — the head of the younger de Kersaint.

"Tas de charognes!" shouted the young man — "yes, we have arms; and we know how to use them! The first one of you who enters this house, I shall make his black brains leap!"

He had a single loaded pistol: there was not another weapon in the building. He counted on the cowardice of the mob. But the negroes knew, or thought they knew, the truth: the old béké had not lied to them; — they were not afraid.

"Bon! nou ké ouè!" menaced the leader. . . . "Ennou!" he cried, turning to the crowd, "crazé caïe-là!" Almost in the same instant, a stone shot by some powerful hand whirred by the head of the younger de Kersaint, and crashed into the furniture

of the apartment. Vainly the shutters were bolted: a second missile dashed them open again; — a third shivered those of the next window. Stone followed stone. There were several persons severely injured; — a lady was stricken senseless; — a gentleman's shoulder fractured. And the cry of the crowd was for more stones — "Ba nou ouôches! — ba ouôches!" — because the central pavement before the house was a rough cement, affording scanty material for missiles. But the lower cross-street was paved with rounded rocks from the river-bed; — a line of negresses formed from the point of attack to the corner at the cry of "Fai lachaîne!" — and the disjointed pavement was passed up along the line by apronfuls. There was perfect order in this system of supplying projectiles: the black women had been trained for generations to "make the chain" when transporting stone from the torrents to the site of a building, or the place of a protection-wall.

Then the stone shower became terrific — pulverizing furniture, bursting partitions, shattering chamber doors. . . . How the Creole negro can fling a stone may be comprehended only by those who have seen him, on mountain roads, bring down fruit from trees growing at inaccessible heights. . . . All the shutters of the upper front rooms had already ceased to exist; — the inmates had sought refuge in the rear apartments. But the shutters of the windows of the ground-floor, being very heavy, solid, and partly protected with iron, continued to resist;

and the doors of the great archway defied the brawny pressure of all the shoulders pushed against them.

"Méné pié-bois içi! — pié-bois! — pié-bois!" cried the men, straining to burst the doors, under cover of the bombardment; and the cry passed up the street toward the mountain slope. . . . From within the house it was no longer possible to observe what the mob were doing; — the windows were unapproachable. But such a shout suddenly made itself heard from the street that it was evident something new had occurred. . . . "Ah! the soldiers!" joyfully exclaimed Madame de Kersaint.

She was mistaken. The fresh excitement had been caused by the appearance of the pié-bois — a weighty log carried by a crew of twenty men — all crying "Ba lai! — ba lai!" Then those pushing at the doors fell back to give the battering-ram full play.

The men chanted as they swung it. . . . "Soh-soh! — yaïe-yah! Rhâlé fò!" And all the house shook to the enormous blow.

"Soh-soh! — yaïe-yah! Rhâlé fò!" Bolts and locks burst; — the framework itself loosened in a showering of mortar; — the broad iron bar within still held, but it had bent like a bow, and the doors had yielded fully five inches.

"Soh-soh! — yaïe-yah! Rhâlé fò!" A clang of broken metal; an explosion of splintered timber — and the doors were down. The archway rang out

the clap of their fall like a cannon-shot; the log-bearers dropped their log; — a brute roar of exultation acclaimed the feat. . . . Within, all was black.

There was a moment's hesitation; — the darkness and the voidness intimidated. "Pòté flambeau vini!" shouted the chief to the torch-bearers, reaching for a light . . . "ba moin! ba moin!" He snatched one, and leaped forward, brandishing his weapon in the other hand. But precisely as he passed the threshold, a stunning report pealed through the archway; and the tall negro staggered, dropping torch and cutlass — flung up both naked arms, reeled half round, and fell on his back, dead. The younger de Kersaint had kept his word.

The negroes at the entrance would have turned back in panic; but the pressure from behind, the rush of blind fury, was resistless; and the van of the populace was hurled into the archway — struggling, howling, striking, stumbling over the corpse and the broken doors — and with such an impetus that many fell. . . . The younger de Kersaint had not thought of retreat, even when the gentlemen who had descended with him, finding resistance hopeless, were remounting to the upper rooms: he still stood at the foot of the stairs with his empty pistol — believing himself able to hold back the invasion, to terrorize by moral force. But terror may become a blind rage, even in the slave — when made desperate by the necessity of confronting a pistol muzzle; and the blacks flung themselves on the young man

with the very fury of fear. He had time only to dash his useless weapon in the face of the foremost, as a bayonet fastened to a pole passed through his body: then he sank without one cry under such a mad slashing of cutlasses that strikers wounded each other in their frenzy. . . . Simultaneously a double-barreled gun, loaded with ball, was fired from the entrance at those reascending the stairway — both barrels together — and M. Desrivières fell. He expired almost instantly, before his comrades could drag him into a room, of which the doors were at once barricaded with all the heavy furniture available; — the entire charge had entered his back, shattering the spine.

. . . Then, after the momentary panic, came the reaction of hate, the mob thirst of vengeance; — traditional hate of the white intensified by the passions of the hour; vengeance for the fear inspired, for the killing of their leader, for all fancied or remembered wrongs. But the apartments of the ground-floor were empty: the békés had retreated to the upper rooms, whither it might be dangerous to pursue them; — perhaps they had arms in reserve for the last extremity. It was at all events certain they could not escape. The windows of the rear were high, and looked down upon a plantation road skirting cane-fields, where armed blacks were on the watch; and the side walls were solid masonry without a single opening. Neither was escape possible

by way of the roof — elevated fully twenty feet above the tiles of adjoining cottages; — the békés were helpless! . . . But no one now offered to lead the assault. There were only clamorings — hideous threats — utterances that seemed the conception of cannibals in delirium. . . . Meanwhile the body of the dead leader, raised upon a broken door for a litter, was being paraded through the streets by torchlight: armed men ran beside the corpse, pointing to the pink brain oozing from the wound, and crying: "Mi! — yo k'assassiné nou! yo ka tchoué fouè nou!" . . . The excitement became maniacal; but one voice — a woman's, the voice of the wife of dead Sylvain, shrieked clearly through it all:

"Metté difé, zautt! — brilé toutt béké!"

And the mob caught up the cry — stormed it through the street. "Difé! — metté difé!" . . . But what if the békés should make a desperate rush upon the incendiaries? . . . "Oté lescalié!" some one suggested, and settled all hesitations. There were arms enough to tear down any stairway in five minutes: it took less time for the rioters to obey the suggestion. They pulled away the stairs; — they smashed the wreck into kindling-wood, piled it on the tiles of the hall-way, and fired it with torches. The balustrade was of mahogany, but the steps were bois du nord — yellow pine, resinous and light. . . . "Ka pleine gomme! — ka brilé bien!" . . . Simultaneously the furniture of the lower rooms

was demolished; — everything they contained was heaped upon the fire — combustible or incombustible: portraits, curtains, verrines, bronzes, mats, mirrors, hangings. . . . "Sacré tonnè, nou ké brilé toutt! — Ké ouè!" . . . There were sounds of affright overhead — of feet wildly running — of furniture being dragged away from doors; — there were shrieks. . . . "Ouaill! — not so brave now, the cursed békés!" . . . Then faces appeared through the smoke, looking down — a gray-haired lady, striving to be heard, to speak to some heart; — a young mother dumbly pointing to her infant. Two black arms reached up toward her in savage mockery, and a negress hoarsely screamed: "Ba moin li! — moin sé vlopé enlai y conm chatrou!" — miming the cuttle-fish devouring its prey! A burst of obscene laughter followed the infamous jest. . . . But the heat and smoke became unendurable; — the incendiaries retreated — mostly to the street — a few to the cane-fields in the rear, to watch for any possible attempts at escape. There was no more stone-throwing: the flingers were weary; and the mob was content to watch the progress of its vengeance. The shrieks could still be heard: they were answered by gibes and curses.

The archway reddened — lighted — began to glow like a furnace, forcing by its heat a general falling back from the entrance. . . . And soon the crackling within became a low roar, like the sound of a torrent; — all the rez-de-chaussée was seized

by the flame. It put long yellow tongues through the windows; — they serpentined about the masonry, licked the key-stones and the wall above them — striving to climb; — began to devour the framework of the shutters. . . . And, at intervals, from street to street, sounded the sinister melancholy blowing of the great sea-shells.

Over all the roofs of the city the voice of an immense bell began to peal — rapidly, continuously: the bourdon of the cathedral was tolling the tocsin. One after another the bells of the lesser churches joined in the alarm. But, for the first time, the pumps remained in their station-houses; — the black firemen ignored the summons! And still the soldiers — though muttering mutiny — were rigidly confined to their barracks by superior order. Yet the Governor [1] knew the city was at the mercy of a negro mob — knew the white population in peril of massacre. The order seemed incredible to those who read it with their eyes; — it remains one of the stupefying facts of French colonial history — one of the many, not of the few, which appear to justify the white Creole's undying hate of Republicanism.

. . . Fanned by a south breeze, the flames assailed the rear more rapidly than the front rooms of the besieged dwelling — destroying communication between them by devouring the lobbies connected with the wrecked end of the stairway. And, through the outpouring of smoke, men began to drop or leap

[1] Rostoland, maréchal de camp, gouverneau provisoire.

from back windows — abandoning the women and children — goaded by the swift menace of the hideous death of fire. On the side of the street there could have been no hope; — on that of the fields there were fewer enemies: there was one desperate chance. Of those who took it, the first two were killed almost as soon as they touched the ground; — the third, a French stranger, although frightfully wounded, was able to run for his life nearly two hundred yards before being overtaken and despatched. But two others could profit by the incident; — gaining the high canes, they fled at a crouching run between the stems — doubling — twisting — and were quickly lost to view. . . . "Béké lacampagne mênm!" — cried the disappointed pursuers: "yo ka fenne kanne!" Only a country Creole could have known the trick, successfully practiced by maroon negroes — fenne kanne (splitting the cane). . . . Darkness and the terror of serpents aided their flight.

Some chivalrous men — M. de Kersaint was of these — refused that desperate chance; remained to give the consolation of their presence to the helpless women — mothers and wives, and young girls delicately bred, into the perfumed quiet of whose existence no shadow of fear had ever fallen before. . . . There were still nearly thirty souls within the flaming house; and the soldiers were still confined to their barracks!

The smoke being blown to the north, the view of

the burning dwelling continued almost unobscured on the street side; — but as yet, since the stone-throwing began, no one had appeared at the front windows. The rabble watched and wondered: it seemed as if all communication between the front and rear of the besieged house had already been cut off, so that the last scene of the tragedy would remain hidden from them — a brutal disappointment! The first frenzy had exhausted itself: there remained only that revolting apathy which in savage natures follows the perpetration of a monstrous act; — the tempest of outcries subsided to a low tide-roar of excited converse. . . .

"They are women and children who scream like that."

"Malediction! they are békés — let them all roast together!"

"Ouill papa! — they burned enough of us when they had the power to do it."

"Yes! they burned poor negresses for sorcery. The priest who confessed them said they were innocent."

"Ah! c'est taille-Toto ça! — that was in the old times!"

"Old times! We don't forget. These are the new times, monfi!"

"C'est jusse! . . . We are fighting for our liberty now."

"Houlo!" . . . A new roar went up: — there was an apparition at one of the windows.

"Mi! yon négresse!"

"It is the da! — Jesis-Maïa!"

"Pé! — pé zautt!"

"Pé!" . . . The word ran from mouth to mouth; — almost a hush followed its passage through the crowd, a hush of malignant expectation; — then Youma's powerful contralto rang out with the distinctness of a bugle-call.

"Eh! tas de capons!" she cried, fearlessly — "cowards afraid to face men! Do you believe you will win your liberty by burning women and children? . . . Who were the mothers of you?"

"We are burning békés," screamed a negress in response: "they kill us; we kill them. C'est jusse!"

"You lie!" cried Youma. "The békés never murdered women and children."

"They did!" vociferated a mulatto in the mob, better dressed than his fellows; — "they did! In seventeen hundred and twenty-one! In seventeen hundred and twenty-five!" . . .

"Aïe, macaque!" mocked Youma. "So you burn negresses now for imitation! What have the negresses done to you, Ape?"

"They are with the békés."

"You were with the békés yesterday, the day before yesterday, and always — every one of you. The békés gave you to eat — the békés gave you to drink — the békés cared for you when you were sick. . . . The békés gave *you* freedom, O you traitor mulatto! — gave you a name, saloprie! — gave you

the clothes you wear, ingrate! *You!* — you are not fighting for your liberty, liar! — the békés gave it to you long ago for your black mother's sake! . . . Fai doctè, milatt! — I know you! . . . coward without a family, without a race! — fai filosofe, O you renegade, who would see a negress burn because a negress was your mother! — Allé! — bâtà-béké!" . . .

Then Youma could not make herself heard: a fresh outburst of vociferation drowned her voice. But her reproaches had struck home in at least one direction: she had touched and stirred the smouldering contempt, the secret jealous hate of the black for the freedman of color; and the mulatto's discomfiture was hailed by yells of ironical laughter. In the same moment there was a violent pushing and swaying; — some one was forcing his way to the front through all the pressure — rapidly, furiously — smiting with his elbows, battering with his shoulders: a giant capre. . . . He freed himself, and sprang into the clear space before the flaming building — making his cutlass flicker about his head — and shouted:

"Nou pa ka brilé négresse!" . . .

The mulatto put to scorn advanced and would have spoken; — ere he could utter a word, the travailleur, with a sudden backward blow of his unarmed hand, struck him to the ground.

"A moin! méfouè!" thundered the tall new-comer; — "Stand by me, brothers! — we do not burn negresses!"

And Youma knew it was Gabriel who stood there alone — colossal, menacing, magnificent — daring the hell about him for her sake. . . .

"Ni raison! ni raison!" responded numbers. . . . "Non! nou pa ka brilé négresse! . . . Châché léchelle!" Gabriel had forced sympathy — wrung some sentiment of compassion from those wild-beast hearts. . . . "Pòté léchelle vini! — içi yon léchelle!" was clamored through the crowd . . . "a ladder! — a ladder!"

Five minutes — and a ladder touched the window. Gabriel himself ascended it — reached the summit — put out his iron hand. Even as he did so, Youma, stooping to the sill, lifted Mayotte from behind it.

The child was stupid with terror; — she did not know him.

"Can you save her?" asked Youma — holding up the little fair-haired girl.

Gabriel could only shake his head; — the street sent up so frightful a cry. . . .

"Non! — non! — non! — non! — pa lè yche-béké! — janmain yche-béké!"

"Then you cannot save me!" cried Youma, clasping the child to her bosom "janmain! janmain, mon ami!"

"Youma, in the name of God . . ."

"In the name of God you ask me to be a coward! . . . Are you vile, Gabriel? — are you base? . . . Save myself and leave the child to burn? . . . Go!"

"Leave the béké's yche! — leave it! — leave it, girl!" shouted a hundred voices.

"Moin!" cried Youma, retreating beyond the reach of Gabriel's hand — "moin! . . . Never shall I leave it — never! I shall go to God with it."

"Burn with it, then!" howled the negroes . . . "down with that ladder! down with it, down with it!" Gabriel had barely time to save himself, when the ladder was dragged away. All the first fury of the riot seemed to have been rekindled by the sight of the child; — again broke forth the tempest of maledictions.

But it calmed: there was another reaction . . . Gabriel had men to strive with him. They forced the ladder once more into position; — they formed a desperate guard about it with their cutlasses; — they called to Youma to descend. . . . She only waved her hand in disdain: she knew she could not save the child.

And the fierce heat below began to force back the guard at the foot of the ladder. . . . Suddenly Gabriel uttered a curse of despair. Touched by a spirit of flame, the ladder itself had ignited — and was burning furiously.

Youma remained at the window. There was now neither hate nor fear in her fine face: it was calm as in the night when Gabriel had seen her stand unmoved with her foot on the neck of the serpent.

Then a sudden light flared up behind her, and

brightened. Against it her tall figure appeared, as in the Chapel of the Anchorage Gabriel had seen, against a background of gold, the figure of Notre Dame du Bon Port. . . . Still her smooth features expressed no emotion. Her eyes were bent upon the blond head hiding against her breast; — her lips moved; — she was speaking to the child. . . . Little Mayotte looked up one moment into the dark and beautiful bending face — and joined her slender hands, as if to pray.

But with a piteous cry, she clung to Youma's bosom again. For the thick walls quivered as walls quiver when a hurricane blows; — and there were shrieks — frantic, heart-sickening, from the rear — and a noise of ruining, as of smothered thunder. Youma drew off her foulard of yellow silk, and wrapped it about the head of the child: then began to caress her with calm tenderness — murmuring to her — swaying her softly in her arms — all placidly, as though lulling her to sleep. Never to Gabriel's watching eyes had Youma seemed so beautiful.

Another minute — and he saw her no more. The figure and the light vanished together, as beams and floor and roof all quaked down at once into darkness. . . . Only the skeleton of stone remained — black-smoking to the stars.

And stillness came — a stillness broken only by the hissing and crepitation of the stifled fire, the booming of the tocsin, the far blowing of the great sea-shells. The victims had ceased to shriek; — the

murderers stood appalled by the ghastliness of their consummated crime.

Then, from below, the flames wrestled out again — crimsoning the smoke whirls, the naked masonry, the wreck of timbers. They wriggled upward, lengthening, lapping together — lifted themselves erect — grew taller, fiercer — twined into one huge fluid spire of tongues that flapped and shivered high into the night. . . .

The yellowing light swelled — expanded from promontory to promontory — palpitated over the harbor — climbed the broken slopes of the dead volcano leagues through the gloom. The wooded mornes towered about the city in weird illumination — seeming loftier than by day — blanching and shadowing alternately with the soaring and sinking of fire; — and at each huge pulsing of the glow, the white cross of their central summit stood revealed, with the strange passion of its black Christ.

. . . And the same hour, from the other side of the world — a ship was running before the sun, bearing the Republican gift of liberty and promise of universal suffrage to the slaves of Martinique.

END OF VOLUME IV